Baria Ahmar's Translation of Functional Repetition in Mostaghanemi's

Memory in the Flesh into English

ترجمة بارعة الأحمر لأسلوب التكرار الوظيفي في رواية *ذاكرة الجسد* لأحلام مستغانمي الى الانجليزية

By

Niveen Osama Abualhija

B. A. English Language and Literature Yarmouk University, 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation in the Department of Translation, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.

Committee Members:

Prof. Abdullah Shunnaq..........................Supervisor

Prof. Lutfi Abulhaija ....Member

Dr. Mohammad Al-Quraan..........................Member

December, 2014

I

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my great parents "Hadaia & Osama " who have given me the physical, financial, and spiritual support without them I would never be able to finish this work.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my brothers & sisters " Eyad, Ola, Rana, and Basil " & to Mr. Mohammad Abu alhija who never hesitate to provide assistance.

Thanks all for being in my life

Yarmouk University

Faculty of Arts

Department of Translation

M.A Translation

Master Thesis

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Abbreviations

SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
ST	Source Text
TT	Target Text

<u>NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION</u>

The following system of transliteration has been adopted in this thesis

ء	'	ر	r	غ	gh
ب	b	ز	z	ف	f
ت	t	س	s	ق	q
ث	th	ش	sh	ك	k
ج	j	ص	ṣ	ل	l
ح	ḥ	ض	ḍ	م	m
خ	kh	ط	ṭ	ن	n
د	d	ظ	ẓ	ه	h
ذ	dh	ع	‘	و	w
				ي	y

Simple vowels: <u>fatḥa:</u> a; <u>ḍamma:</u> u; <u>kasra:</u> i

Abstract

Baria Ahmar's Translation of Functional Repetition in Mostaghanemi's *Memory in the Flesh* into English

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This study aims to examine Baria Ahmar's translation of functional repetition in Mostaghanemi's novel (*Dhakirt Al-Jasad*) into English trying to highlight the most and the least frequent types of functional repetition in the first chapter of this novel. The study also aims to investigate whether the translator, Baria Ahmar, was successful in rendering the style of functional repetition in her translation or not. To accomplish these goals, Thirty one examples of functional repetition were selected carefully from the first chapter of the novel, together with their English translations. Based on Shunnaq's (1989) categorization of functional repetition, the selected examples were distributed into three groups: root repetition, pattern repetition, and repetition through semantic elaboration which is divided into two subcategories: same word repetition and repetition through the use of word-strings. The researcher analyzed

the selected examples and compared them to their English counterparts. The study concludes that the most frequent type of functional repetition in the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* is the same word repetition, and the least frequent type of functional repetition in the same chapter is the root repetition. It also concludes that although the translator, Baria Ahmar, was not successful in maintaining root and same word repetition in her translation, she was able to maintain the style of pattern repetition and the style of repetition through the word-strings in most selected examples.

Keywords: translation, functional repetition, root repetition, pattern repetition, repetition through semantic elaboration.

Chapter One

Introduction and Method

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss some issues related to the study such as some definitions of translation, the task of a translator, equivalence in translation, and brief information about literary translation. The researcher will also clarify the statement of problem, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the study. After that, the method of the study, including data collection, population and sample of the study, and data analysis, will be addressed. Finally, the questions and the limitations of the study will be mentioned.

1.1.1 Some Definitions of Translation

Language is the system by which people can communicate. As there are many societies, civilizations, and cultures, there are many languages. Each community has its own language to communicate, to exchange ideas and feelings, but how can we mutually benefit from cultures and civilizations of other societies without understanding their languages? This question illustrates the significance of translation. As a thesis conducted in the field of translation, it is worth including some definitions of this concept. There are various definitions of translation; below are some common definitions as indicated by various linguists. Catford (1965:20) defines translation as "the replacement of textual

material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)." He (ibid) also states that translation is influenced by the syntactical, cultural and stylistic differences between SL and TL. According to Wilss (1969:95), the notion of translation competence is "aptly assessed in transfer situations that require at least some degree of adaptation to new and challenging textual demands." He describes such situations as accommodatory situations which need structural adjustment and generally textual manipulation.

Nida and Taber (1982:12) indicate that translation is "reproducing in the receptor language the closet natural equivalent of source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. Newmark (1988:5) defines translation "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way the author intended the text." Newmark (1988:45-47) also states that there are various types of translation such as: word-for-word translation, faithful translation, semantic translation, literal translation, free translation, idiomatic translation, adaptation translation, and communicative translation. Bell (1991:5) indicates that translation is "the expression in one language of what has been expressed in another, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences"

Sager (1994) illustrates that translation is a motivated industrial activity, supported by information technology. Ghazala (1995:1) defines

translation as "all processes and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language into the target language".

We can notice from all the above-mentioned definitions that translation is not only a process between two languages (SL and TL) or two texts (ST and TT).It is not a simple inter-lingual transfer, but it is rather a process between cultures. It includes transferring the meanings, ideas, styles, aesthetic effects, ideologies and cultures as well. In other words, it includes a battle between target and source cultures. Thus, it is a very difficult and accurate task for a translator to translate a text faithfully and maintain all its features at the same time.

1.1.2 The Task of Translator

The translator's task is supposed to be accurate and not that easy, as he is required to render a textual material from one language into another taking into consideration any syntactic, cultural, and/or stylistic differences between both languages. S/he should maintain the style and the same aesthetic effect of the ST, and pay attention to syntactic and cultural variability. Therefore, a translator should prove his honesty and proficiency in translating and convince the audience as well. In addition, a translator should produce a TT that has an influence on TT's audience which is similar to that of ST's audience.

Xian (2009:29) thinks that translation is a struggle between the translator's language and culture stored in his mind on one hand, and the

ST he is going to translate, on the other hand. Hence, he believes that a translator is confined to his own language, culture, and ideology to render the ST into the TL successfully by choosing the right words and expressions.

Venuti (1995:1) proposes that a translator should have an invisible role. His role should never be noticed in the TT. Consequently, a translator is committed to reflecting the style, the norms, and all features of ST in his translation. Venuti (1995:2) states:

> A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text.

To sum up, a translator is a scientist, an artist and a craftsman as well. S/he should produce a grammatical and well-organized text, depending on different strategies of translation. A translator should also be talented in writing and able to maintain the style and the aesthetic effect of SL. S/he should be both bi-lingual and bi-cultural. Like a skillful craftsman, a translator should know the use of his tools including words, sentences, punctuation marks, and other linguistic tools, as they are the linguistic bones that form the skeleton of a language.

Nida (1964) indicates that a translator is under pressure because of the conflict between meaning and form. It is hard for a translator to maintain or even approximate the style of the ST without sacrificing

some of the meaning. At the same time, being strict to the literal content may cause a noticeable loss of stylistic features. In addition, a translator also faces a significant problem which is the proper understanding of his own role. Is translation a science, an art, or a skill which can be acquired by practice?

Nida (ibid) answers the above question by claiming that translation is an art, a skill, and a science as well. It is an art, since the artistic elements cannot be denied while translating. It is a skill as the more the translator practices translating, the better his/her translation will be. Some scholars consider translation as a descriptive science.

1.1.3 Equivalence in Translation

Farghal and Shunnaq (1999:5-6) classify equivalence into: formal equivalence which focuses on the form of ST, functional equivalence which focuses on the function of ST and seeks for replacing the SL expressions with TL expressions that have the same function, and thirdly, ideational equivalence which focuses on the communicative sense of the SL expressions apart from their function and form. They (ibid: 9-11) indicate that the type of equivalence a translator chooses depends on three contextual factors: the author, the text, and the audience. For example, a translator should use formal equivalence when dealing with authoritative texts, but s/he should use functional or ideational equivalences to convey the message successfully to the audience when translating newspapers;

while dealing with emotive literary texts, it is favorable to use functional equivalence.

Baker (1992) stats that equivalence can be divided into several types such as: equivalence at word level, above word level, textual, grammatical, and pragmatic equivalence. According to Bassnett (1991:29), sameness cannot exist between ST and TL. It does not exist between various TL versions of the same ST as well. As a result, searching for equivalence does not mean searching for sameness. Newmark (1988:83) divides equivalence into three types: cultural equivalence, functional equivalence, and descriptive equivalence.

Catford (1965:21) argues that finding the right equivalents is the most problematic issue in translation since translators may face many idioms or proverbs for which they have to find the correct equivalence. He (1965:27) distinguishes between textual equivalence which he defines as: "any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion to be equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text", and formal correspondence defined as "any TL category (unit, class, element of structure, etc) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the same place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category in the SL."

Nida (1964:193) divides equivalence into two types: structural correspondence, and dynamic equivalence. He also classifies the structural correspondence into: (a) formal, which is related to

phonological, morphological, and syntactic problems, and (b) lexical, which involves both single words and semantically exocentric phrases.

From the previous definitions of translation, it appears that the concept of equivalence is closely associated with the concept of translation, as a translator must replace a textual material by an equivalent textual material.

1.1.4 Literary Translation

What distinguishes literary translation from other types of translation is that it is an open translation. Moreover, it depends heavily on the translator's knowledge of other cultures as will as his literary sense.

Literary translation may also be affected by the ideology of the translator. Yang (2008) discusses the influence of the translator's ideology on the translated text through the case study of Evan King's translation of Luotuo Xiangzi's *Rickshaw Boy*. He adds that literary translation is presenting the source text in a way that fits the target social expectations as well as the reader's experience. Yang (ibid) also indicates that the target culture shapes the ideology of translators and inspires their translating. Ning (2008) indicates that literary translation is a process of rebirth in which the original was rewritten and transformed.

Bassnet(2002) indicates that translators of novels and other literary texts face many difficulties in there attempts to create readable target

texts, especially when they are trying to be close to the syntactical structures of SL in their translations Bassnett (2002:80) points out that:

> The failure of many translators to understand that a literary text is made up of a complex set of systems existing in a dialectical relationship with other sets outside its boundaries has often led them to focus on particular aspects of a text at the expense of others.

1.2Statement of the Problem

It is believed that one of the trickiest and most sensitive types of translation is literary translation since literary texts contain terms or items that are loaded with emotions distinguished by the use of figurative tools. So, it could be said that it is not a direct or one to one translation, it is open for all interpretations. Dealing particularly with Arabic literature, Mostaghanemi's novel ذاكرة الجسد *(Dhakirt Al-Jasad)* has been chosen to be the case study of this research. The researcher demonstrates that repetition is the most frequent and most dominant style in this novel, especially the functional repetition. Thus, the researcher thinks that Ahmar's translation of functional repetition in Mostaghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* is a subject that deserves studying and discussing.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to shed some light on the way Ahmar follows in her translating functionally repeated expressions in Mostaghanemi's ذاكرة الجسد *(Dhakirt Al-Jasad)* into English, particularly the expressions of root repetition, pattern repetition, same-word

repetition, and the repetition through the use of word-strings, in order to investigate whether Ahmar accurately succeeded in maintain the style of functional repetition or not. Moreover, the study also aims to spot out the most and least frequent types of functional repetition in Mostaghanemi's ذاكرة الجسد *(Dhakirt Al-Jasad).*

1.4 Significance of the Study

First of all, this study gains its significance from the fact that it deals with a very rich type of translation which is literary translation. This type of translation may cause many difficulties to the translator since it is a challenge to produce a TT which has the same stylistic and emotive features of the literary ST.

Secondly, this study deals with a famous novel written by the famous Algerian writer "Ahlam Mostaghanemi" who has been called "the world's best-known arabophone woman novelist ". Moreover, it deals with a significant issue in translation which is functional translation.

Finally, this study is very helpful for the translators and students of translation as it shows some methods that might be followed while translating literary works.

1.5 Methods and Procedures

1.5.1 Data Collection

The examples used for the purpose of this study were extracted from the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's ذاكرة الجسد *(Dhakirt Al-Jasad)*, (p.7-49) in addition to their English translations conducted by Ahmar (2003). All the selected examples are instances of functional repetition.

1.5.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study includes all cases of functional repetition existent in chapter one of Mostaghanemi's *ذاكرة الجسد (Dhakirt Al-Jasad)*. Forty examples of functional repetition were found by the translator and a sample of thirty one examples of functional repetition was selected from this chapter for the purpose of the current study. With regard to the translation in question, the researcher took the English counterparts of the thirty one selected Arabic examples translated by Ahmar (2003).

1.5.3 Data Analysis

The thirty one examples of functional repetition selected from the first chapter of the Arabic novel will be categorized according to Shunnaq's (1989) categorization of functional repetition. Following Shunnaq's categorization, these examples have been divided into three categories: root repetition, pattern repetition, and repetition through semantic elaboration. The last one has been divided into two subcategories: same-word repetition and repetition through the use of

word-strings. Each Arabic example has been compared to its English counterpart, then the translations have been discussed and analyzed.

1.6 Questions of the Study

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the most frequent type of functional repetition in the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's novel *ذاكرة الجسد (Dhakirt Al-Jasad)?*

2. What is the least frequent type of functional repetition in the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's novel *ذاكرة الجسد (Dhakirt Al-Jasad)?*

3. To what extent was the translator, Ahmar, successful in transferring the meaning and maintaining the style of root repetition, pattern repetition, and repetition through semantic elaboration in her translation of the thirty one selected examples into English?

1.7 Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to investigating the style of functional repetition, thus excluding other types of repetition, and/or other figurative tools in the novel.

2. The study is limited to the first chapter of the novel. The researcher did not select any examples of functional repetition from other chapters.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Background and Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at providing a brief theoretical background about the novel *ذاكرة الجسد* (*Dhakirt Al-Jasad*), and the author *Ahlam Mostaghanemi*. It also presents some information about repetition: its nature, its definitions, and its types as exemplified in the works of some scholars in both languages, Arabic and English. After that, some selected studies related to repetition in translation are reviewed.

2.2 About the Author "Ahlam Mostaghanemi"

Ahlam was born in 1953 in Tunis. During the Algerian liberation war, her father was a militant political activist; after her family had moved back to Algeria, he occupied high positions as an intellectual and a humanitarian.

As the eldest sibling, Ahlam was responsible for providing the financial support to her family. She worked as a radio host. At the age of seventeen, she became well-known to the public in Algeria on the national radio with the poetic daily show “Hamasat” (Whispers). At the time, she had the chance to acquire the right to study in Arabic after a very long period of prohibition by the French colonization.

Her sense of liberation came from the Arabic language as her family had not mastered it. Accordingly, she started to express herself freely on

subjects like love and women's rights. At that time, the Algerian society was not prepared to have such freedom showed by girls. The Board of Directors of the University of Algeria refused Mostaghanemi's enrolment for Master's degree, because, as they said, her unacceptable freedom of expression would affect other students at the University. She was even expelled from the Union of Algerian Writers because she did not comply with the political line. At that moment, Mostaghanemi's battle began against sexism.

Ahlam met Georges El Rassi, a Lebanese journalist, got married in 1976 and settled in Paris where she completed her studies at the Sorbonne, and she got a doctorate degree in Sociology in 1982.

After she had settled down in 1993 in Lebanon, she submitted her novel ذاكرة الجسد (*Dhakirt Al-Jasad*) to the publishing house "Dar Al Adab". This novel was the reason behind Mostaghanemi's great fame as it had a clear impact on Ahlam's literary procession especially after being part of the wonderful trilogy with the two other novels: *Fawḍa Al Ḥawas* (The Chaos of Senses) in 1997 and *'Aber Saryr* (Bed Hopper) in 2003. In 1998, Ahlam got Naguib Mahfouz's Literary Prize for her novel *Dhakirt AL-Jasad*; she published the novel *Nesyan* (The Art of Forgetting) which brought her closer to the female audience. Her latest novel *Al Aswad Ylyqu; Bki (Black Suits You Well*) was published in 2012 confirming Ahlam's status as an important novelist. Her novels were adopted in the

curricula of many universities and high schools, and they were translated into many languages.

Ahlam lectured in many universities including : University of Michigan in 2005 , Mit Boston in 2005 , Yale University in 2005, University of Lyon in 2003 , Montpellier University in 2002 , University of Sorbonne in 2002 , University of Maryland in 1999 , and The American University of Beirut , 1995 . Of course, as a successful and a great novelist, Ahlam has got several awards and honors.

2.3 About the Novel "*Dhakirt Al-Jasad*"

In this novel, Ahlam shows us the ravages of colonialism and its consequence in Algeria. She talks about the Algerian struggle and the post-independence problems, but she does not do this directly. She wants to tell the history from the victim's point of view. So, she allows her protagonist, Khalid, to present the story of Algeria.

Khalid , an Algerian freedom fighter who lost his arm in the struggle against the Fernch, is telling the story by addressing his words to Ahlam or (Hayat) , the young Algerian novelist and the daughter of his friend and revolutionary leader , SI Tahir , with whom Khalid spent six months in the same cell after having participated in the demonstration. During those six months, he learnt a lot from Si Tahir. Their relationship was very strong. Therefore, Khalid did not hesitate to join the armed struggle against the French colonialism with Si Tahir especially after the death of

his mother. He loved Algeria as his second mother. During the war, he lost his left arm in fighting the French, and he was forced to move to Tunisia to receive treatment. Si Tahir asked him to visit his family in Tunisia and to register Si Tahir's newborn daughter in the civil records. It was Khalid who told Si Tahir's wife that her newborn daughter who has been already named Hayat should be officially registered as Ahlam.

After twenty years, Khalid became a respected artist and he made an exhibit of paintings in Paris where he encountered Ahlam by surprise. Her bracelet took him to his past, to Algeria, and to his mother. She took him back to his past with his memories, and that was the beginning of the love story even though he was old enough to be her father.

The status of Ahlam at the end of the story reflects the position of the new Algeria, the ravages of colonialism and its influence on the Algerian society. She was married to a wealthy Algerian businessman. Her marriage presents the values of bourgeoisie, foreign influence, and materialism. Despite all the disappointments and pain, Khalid returned to his country. His intention to raise his nephews after the death of his brother would be an attempt to rebuild a good society.

In the researcher's opinion, the title *Memory in the Flesh* could be translated as *Memory of the Flesh*, but while focusing on its meaning and on the theme of the novel, the researcher thinks that *Memory in the Flesh* is a very suitable title for the novel. The word "flesh" could refer to

Khalid's amputated arm which reminds him of the battlefield, Si Tahir, and his country. It takes him to the memories and expresses his loss of love, past and country. However, he is obssessed with the intention to return to his country to help raise his nephews after the death of his brother, which might be an attempt to rebuild a good society. From the researcher's point of view, the word "flesh" may also refer to Ahlam herself, since she reminds Khalid of his past memories. She reminds him of his mother and his long lost friendship with his friend, Si Tahir. She is simply the embodiment of his country. "I condemned you to be my Casantina" Khalid says in the novel.

2.4Repetition

Most linguists define repetition by indicating that it is the act of saying the same thing over and over again, or repeating a word or a phrase in a sentence or a paragraph. However, these definitions are not accurate enough for such an important topic. Thus, the researcher attempts to provide some simplified explanations of repetition as mentioned in some significant works with regard to this linguistic phenomenon in both Arabic and English.

2.4.1Repetition in English

Different interesting studies have been conducted in the field of repetition in English including its definitions, its types, its nature, and its functions. Below are some of the studies that are related to repetition in English.

2.4.1.1 Repetition according to Haiman

Haiman (1997) argues that English is an economic language, i.e., it prefers the use of pronouns instead of repeating the same nouns and the use of phrases such as: 'so forth' ,'blah, blah, blah' , 'etecetra' .

2.4.1.2 Repetition according to Tannen

Tannen (1989) refers to repetition as a poetic aspect of language that is elaborated in literary discourse to create interpersonal involvement. She also states that repetition is used for different purposes such as: production, comprehension, connection and interaction.

2.4.1.3 Repetition according to Kuiper

Kuiper (1982) investigates lexical repetition. He states that this type of repetition results from performance factors such as: constituent repair, hesitation, and focusing on the hearer's attention. So, it may exist in spoken discourse.

In addition to the scholars who have been mentioned above, other scholars have defined repetition from similar or different perspectives. For example, Gray (1984:172) defines repetition as "a vital part of the

language of literature both in verse and prose." Hawthorn (2000:301) states that repetition is "a key means whereby the technical rate of redundancy is increased in a work." Cudden (1982:564) defines repetition as "an essential unifying element in nearly all poetry and much prose.".

2.4.2 Repetition in Arabic

After talking about repetition in English .We will discuss it in Arabic according to Al-Jubouri, Koch, Shunnaq, Ghazala, Avishur and Torresi.

2.4.2.1 Repetition according to Al-Jubouri

Al-Jubouri (1984) was among the first contemporary scholars to investigate repetition in Modern Standard Arabic. He classifies repetition into three types: repetition at morphological level, word level, and chunk level. Below is a brief illustration for each of these three types:

Type One: Repetition at Morphological Level: Al Jubouri (ibid) identifies two types of repetition at the morphological level which are pattern repetition and root repetition. The pattern repetition involves words that have similar or identical morphological patterns as in the following example:

(المنحنيات التي تعرجت داخلها هبوطاً وصعوداً)

"Curves that zigzagged inside it ups and downs".

The words (هبوط) and (صعود) have the same morphological pattern which is (فعول) and the final ['alif] comes as a mark of the adverbial circumstantial role (حال) in the sentence.

Root repetition refers to words that shared the same root. Al-Jubori (1984:65) states that Arabic roots are ordered sets of three or four consonants, "each root has a general meaning which is the common denominator of the meanings of all the forms in which it realized."

Type Two: Repetition at Word Level: Al-Jubouri (ibid) divides this type of repetition into two types:

- Word repetition: this type involves the repetition of the same lexical item.

- Word strings: this type of repetition refers to the use of two or more different lexical items which are strung together to form a group sharing the same meaning. This type of repetition may create semantic elaboration, and it may happen by using verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs.

Type Three: Repetition at chunk level: this type may be created through parallelism and paraphrasing.

- Parallelism: Al-Jubouri states that parallelism is a text-building device. It refers to two or more nouns, phrases or sentences which are identical in structure.

-Paraphrasing: AlJubouri (1984:110) states that "while parallelism is a repetition of form, paraphrase refers to a repetition of substance. It involves a restatement of a certain point or argument a number of times."

2.4.2.2 Repetition according to Koch

In her doctoral dissertation on contemporary Arabic, Koch (1981) studies the concept of repetition, its nature and its function. She illustrates that repetition in Arabic argumentative discourse is divided into several levels: the morphological level, the word level, and the sentence or text level. She argues that repetition in Arabic is significant to achieve persuasion and cohesion in argumentative discourse.

In a later study, Koch (1983) investigates several persuasive texts in contemporary Arabic, and she summarizes the results of their linguistic analysis. The texts are characterized by elaborating patterns of lexical, morphological and syntactic repetition and paraphrase. She states that repetition in Arabic is considered as the key of the linguistic cohesion and the rhetorical effectiveness of the text. She also concludes that Arabic makes its argumentative claims linguistically present by repeating them, paraphrasing them, and clothing them in recurring structural cadences, in contrast to Western modes of argument which are made linguistically cohesive via subordination and hypotaxis.

Koch (1991) investigates the nature of repetition, parallelism, and paraphrase in Arabic discourse, and how repetition, parallelism and paraphrase can function as persuasive devices. She indicates that parallelism is a repetition of structure. So, if two linguistic structures are parallel, they should share a common structural frame. She also states that

lexical couplets, root and pattern repetition can fill a crucial rhetorical and discourse building need.

2.4.2.3 Repetition according to Shunnaq

Shunnaq (1989) tackles the issue of repetition and categorizes it into three main types:

Type one: Repetition forced by language

This kind of repetition is given by language, and language producers use it without choice in informal chats, telephone conversations, and impromptu speeches. Shunnaq classifies this type into two subcategories: repetition forced by morphology ,and repetition forced by syntax.

Type Two: Functional Repetition

Unlike the previous type of repetition, this type is chosen by language producer, and it is used intentionally and functionally. Shunnaq (1989:104) states that:

> The language receiver feels that type two repetitions is a good type of repetition and it is the type needed for the communicativeness of the language. For instance, in the English expression 'very, very good', the repetition of 'very' adds intensification to the meaning. So, it goes without saying that this type of repetition is the most significant and the most required in the language system.

This thesis depends heavily on Shunnaq's categorization of functional repetition. According to him, functional repetition involves root repetition, repetition of patterns, and repetition created through semantic elaboration.

-Root repetition: This type refers to lexical items derived from one root and repeated in a stretch of speech. It may involve several types or structures. In his study, Shunnaq (1989) mentions two structures: the first is the construction involving repetition of roots consisting of a verb together with the corresponding noun of place, and the second structure involves different collocational patterns.

- pattern Repetition: This type of repetition refers to synonym couplets or pairs which are identical syntactically, morphologically and/or phonologically. For example;

شق الأرض وبذر البذور وغرس الأشجار. Shunnaq (1989:114)

The words (شق), (بذر), and (غرس) form a pattern repetition as they all have the same pattern of (فَعْل).

- Repetition created through semantic elaboration: Shunnaq divides this type of repetition into:

-Repetition of the same word: (i.e. actual repetition): This is created by repeating the same word once or more.

- Repetition realized through the use of word-strings: this type is created through different words, two or more which are strung together to form one group sharing the same meaning. According to Shunnaq (1989), word-strings can be divided into seven groups: mentioning a specific item after a general item, totality designated into component parts, exact

specification, intersecting category, culturally associated freezes or near freezes, synonymity, and contrasts.

Type Three: Unnecessary Repetition

This type of repetition is neither common nor necessary in language. It repeats the meaning or the repeated structure which is already mentioned. Shunnaq states (1989: 248):

> It could be safely assumed that this type of repetition is an abnormal phenomenon in language and it could be defined as a word or a phrase conveying a specific message amplified by another word or phrase which conveys either the same or an unnecessary concomitant of the message.

From the previous definition, it could be realized that this repetition is not required, and it does not add any significant meaning. It can be either monotonous or mistaken. In his study, Shunnaq categorizes unnecessary repetition into three sub-categories: Tautology, Pleonasm, and Verbosity.

2.4.2.4 Repetition according to Ghazala

Ghazala (1994:52) explains lexical repetition and its important function as it connects each part of conversation to the other.

In his book *Translation as Problems and Solutions*, Ghazala (1995) addresses the style of repetition and variation by giving and discussing some examples with their translations. According to Ghazala, translators are required to render the important words that are repeated over and over again in a text. Ghazala (1995:236) points out:

> The style of repetition would rather be rendered into Arabic, thus, reflecting the same effect of the original, and at the same time avoiding the problems of finding artificial variations and synonyms, which might be awkward or hard to accept.

Ghazala also tackles the issue of syntactic parallelism which refers to two or more nouns, phrases or sentences that share the same structural frames. Moreover, Ghazala (1995:23) indicates that the syntactic parallelism is not always easy to translate and may cause some problems in translating. However, it is required to attend to the style of parallelism carefully, because it has stylistic functions which may be relevant to meaning.

2.4.2.5 Repetition according to Avishur

Avishur (1984) discusses the repetition of pairs in Semitic languages. His conclusions may be applied to Arabic, since Semitic languages share almost the same characteristics of repetition. Avishur (1984:256) illustrates the purpose of this kind of repetition:

> A double repetition of a pair in a single literary unit, whether in sequence or at spread intervals, is found generally in Semitic literature, specifically in the Bible. A pair may recur in one grammatical syntactical form or in a differing variegated form. There are nominal and verbal pairs that appear both times in their original form, while there are root pairs that occur alternately as a nominal and verbal pair. The purpose of the repetition is either to complete or stress the idea, and at times to function dually.

He also discusses other different types of repetition and examines parallelism in details as a significant issue in repetition.

2.4.2.6 Repetition according to Torresi

Torresi (2010:123) describes repetition as a recurrent syntactical similarity. It exists when several sentences or several parts of a sentence are expressed similarly. Torresi also indicates that parallelism adds rhyme, balance, and clarity to the sentence.

An interesting study about repetition is that conducted by Kyllesdal (2012). She explores the way in which Pinter uses repetition patterns in the two plays *The Hothouse* and *The Caretaker*, and how repetition may reveal examples of power-play. Kyllesdal (2012) indicates the significance of repetition and its various functions in the two plays. In addition, she concludes that repetition can function as a recurrent theme and a linguistic tool as well.

In their study, Al-Ameedi and John (2011) discuss the types and forms of repetition in Arabic and English in order to reveal the points of similarity and dissimilarity of repetition in both languages. They clarify and compare the various types which exist in both languages. They conclude that repetition is common and has an essential role in both languages. However, it had been a distinctive feature of Arabic. They also conclude that semantic and formal repetitions are more elaborate in Arabic than in English, and that there is a comprehensive definition of repetition in Arabic while this definition is not present in English.

2.4.3 Selected Studies Related to Repetition in Translation

In his paper, Shunnaq (1992) examines functional repetition in Arabic realized through the use of word-stings in a set of political speeches delivered mainly at the United Nations by Arab diplomats or Arab leaders. He concludes that it is difficult in some cases to convey the precise meaning of the Arabic word-strings into English due to cultural and linguistic factors, so that a translator should be aware of repetition while translating.

In another study, Shunnaq (1994) discusses the notion of semantic redundancy in both Arabic and English since both languages are remote linguistically, culturally as well as stylistically. Hence, each language has its own pattern of redundancy. His paper argues that a translator may produce an inappropriate translation if he/she is not able to cope with the semantic redundancy. Shunnaq (ibid) illustrates the argument via examples in the hope of improving the translators' production when facing semantic redundancy.

Shunnaq (1994:99) argues that "certain patterns of semantic redundancy could be favored by Arabic but not by English, they may occur as a fault of style or as a result of translating from Arabic into English." He also states that in some cases, the repetition of some lexical items could be functional and convenient in the ST, but when literally translated into TL, it may look pleonastic or tautological. Consequently, a

translator should show a great awareness toward these semantic phenomena.

Nusir (1998) discusses functional repetition in some selected speeches delivered by King Hussein together with their translations. He concludes that translators should maintain the function of repetition in their translations. Nusir recommends that a translator should carefully render any repeated word, expression or idea into the (TL) as it might serve a certain function.

Another significant study that deals with repetition is Shunnaq's study (2000) in which he talks about repetition and emotive expressions in Gamal Abdul Nasser's political speeches. He argues that both repetition and emotiveness have an important role in political discourse, and that what may be functional and emotive in Arabic may seem to be tautological or redundant in English. Therefore, translators must be aware while rendering these expressions into the TL. Shunnaq also states that a translator who is familiar with the Egyptian dialect and Nasser's idiolect would be more capable of rendering his political discourse much more carefully.

Nasr (2000) discusses the repetition of linguistic structures in Gibran Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. She states that the repetition of linguistic structures in *The Prophet* is functional and significant. She also clarifies that a translator should be able to render the form as well as the message

of the ST, by paying attention to the repetition of the linguistic patterns in a literary work.

Another contribution is the study of Al-Tayyan (2001) in which she examines the translation strategies followed by N.Roberts in translating formal lexical repetition in Al-Samman's novel *Kawabis Beirut* in an attempt to find the most suitable translation strategies. She writes about the types and functions of formal lexical repetition. Her study concludes that there are two categories of formal lexical repetition in *Kawabis Beirut*, namely emphatic repetition, and simple repetition. It also concludes that formal lexical repetition is functional especially in literary discourse since it is used to create interaction between the author and his readers, and that translators should be able to render the function of formal lexical repetition into the TL. So, they can produce an equivalent effect.

Abu-Zahra (2001) examines the strategies that are followed by professional translators to render lexical repetition into English when translating Arabic fictional narrative discourse. He makes a textual analysis of repetition in excerpts from three Arabic stories. The first part of the analysis reveals different types of lexical repetition that were found in the stories. These types are: complete lexical repetition, partial lexical repetition, special structures repetition, and repetition of pre-fabricated or idiomatic expressions. The second part of the analysis shows the

strategies utilized by translators to translate lexical repetition. These strategies are: synonymy and near synonymy, deletion, ellipsis, pronominalisation, and paraphrase.

Al-Thebyan (2001) studies the translation of phonological repetition from Arabic into English from a semantic and pragmatic perspective. He relies on the two Arabic novels *Turabuha Zaᶜfaran* and *Ya Banat Lskandariyah*, both written by Edward Al-Kharrat and translated into English by Frances Liardet. He divides this type of repetition for the purposes of his study into five categories which are: alliterative segments, onomatopoeic patterns, phonological word-stings, cognate accusative, rhyming patterns and parallel structures. He points out the functions achieved through the use of repetition. He also discusses the translation problems caused while translating such repetition and some solutions and recommendations are furnished.

Jawad (2007) discusses the devices of repetition as they occur in ST, how instances of repetition are rendered into English and what are the strategies followed in their translations .The material of his study consists of the narrative fiction *Hadith Isa ibn Hisham*(Isa ibn Hisham's Tale) by Muhammad al-Muwaylihi and the three-part *autobiography al-Ayyam* (The Days) by Taha Hussein. He concludes that Arabic prose may contain some repetitive devices of parallelism, paraphrase, and chiasmus to perform two supportive functions: textual and rhetorical.

Based heavily on Shunnaq's study of repetition in Arabic (1989), Al-Yousef's study (2008) examines built-in-language repetition and its frequency in some selected speeches delivered by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and the late president of Egypt, Jamal Abdelnasser. He takes 55 examples from the selected speeches. Haitham also discusses the translation's obstacles that a translator may encounter when translating political discourse. He finally concludes that the use of repetition is more frequent in Arabic than it is in English and that a translator should be aware of both Arabic and English language and culture to produce a good translation.

Al-Hasi (2010) investigates two types of repetition which are: parallelism and paraphrase in Naguib Mahfouz's *Tharthara Fawqa Al-Nyel* and the way in which Frances Liardet translated the structures of these two linguistic phenomena. She follows the classification of Al-Jubouri (1984) and Johnstone (1991) to discuss eighteen Arabic examples on parallelism and paraphrase together with their translations. She concludes that translating parallelism and paraphrase is a problematic issue for translators. So, they have to be aware while rendering them into English in order to avoid ambiguity. She also concludes that Liardet has successfully dealt with these phenomena. However, he breaks the phonological parallel structures since, unlike English, arabic has a strong derivational system.

In his study, Mehawesh (2013) also investigates the issue of repetition depending on Jakobson's model (1960) in describing and defining the grammatical parallelism in the translation of advertising texts. He collects some cosmetics and food advertisements from Alrai, Addustor and Alwaset newspapers over the period between January 2012 and June 2012 with their translations to find examples of grammatical parallelism. He concludes that grammatical parallelism is a significant tool of persuasion in advertisement and that both Arabic and English may contain grammatical parallelism but with different functions. It operates as a figure of speech in English while it is a text structuring device in Arabic.

Chapter Three:

Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, the researcher will review the 31 examples of functional repetition which were selected from the first chapter of Mosteghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* together with their English counterparts from Ahmar's *Memory in the flesh*. These examples are divided according to Shunnaq's categorization (1989) into three groups: root repetition, repetition of patterns, and repetition created through semantic elaboration. The latter is also divided into two subcategories: same-word repetition and repetition created through the use of word-strings. The examples will be discussed and analyzed depending on what was indicated previously in the theoretical background about the concept of repetition.

3.1. Root Repetition: As indicated previously by Al-Jubouri (1984) and Shunnaq (1989), root repetition is a common type of repetition in Arabic. It refers to lexical items derived from one root and repeated in stretches of language.

The researcher found that this type of functional repetition is the least frequent in the selected chapter of the novel as she could extract only three examples from such a chapter. Below are these examples with their translations, followed by a brief analysis of each one.

(1) يأتي صوت عتيقة غائباً، وكأنه يطرح السؤال على شخص غيري.معتذراً دون اعتذار، على وجه للحزن لم اخلعه منذ أيام. (Mostaghanemi: 8)

Atiqa's voice drifts by in my vacuum, as if the question were directed at someone else. Her sorrow at the face of sadness I have been wearing for days now needs no intrusive words. (Ahmar: 1).

(2) فقبلك لم أكتب شيء يستحق الذكر.. معك فقط سأبدأ الكتابة (Mostaghanemi: 9)

Before you, I didn't write anything worth mentioning, but because of you I'll put pen to paper. (Ahmar: 2)

(3)كان يمكن أن أقول أي شيء ففي النهاية ، ليست الروايات سوى رسائل و بطاقات، نكتبها خارج المناسبات المعلنة.. لنعلن نشرتنا النفسية، لمن يهمهم أمرنا

(Mostaghanemi: 11)

I could have written anything because in the end novels are just the letters and greetings cards we write off-season- where we publish the climate of our souls for those who care to take an interest. (Ahmar: 3)

We notice that in each of the above-mentioned three examples there are two words that share the Arabic same root. In the first example, the two words (معتذراً) and (اعتذار) are derived from the same root (عَذَرَ). In the second example (أكتب) and (كتابة) are derived from the root (كَتَبَ), and in the third example (معلن) and (نعلن) have the same root which is (عَلَنَ).Using such type of repetition strengthens and increases eloquence of the Arabic text, which is the point that a translator should pay attention to.

It is clear from the translations of the examples above that the translator does not render root repetitions. She focuses on conveying the meaning rather than using lexical items that share the same root.

In example (1), the translator does not translate the phrase (معتذراً دون اعتذار) literally. However, her translation was functional since she conveys the meaning of this phrase by translating it as (needs no intrusive words). Both phrases have nearly the same idea, but they are not similar in style. Therefore, here, the translator was successful in rendering the meaning, but she does not maintain the stylistic features of the sentence.

In example (2), she resumes her functional translation as she translates the phrase (معك فقط سأبدأ الكتابة) into (because of you I'll put pen to paper) without using two words that share the same root (كَتَبَ). The same analysis also applied to the third example in which the translator conveys the meaning of the phrase (خارج المناسبات المعلنة) by translating it into (off-season), regardless of root repetition.

3.2. Pattern Repetition:

This type of repetition implies almost total coincidence between parallel forms, so it would be regarded as a structural repetition. Pattern repetition involves using words, phrases or sentences that have similar or identical syntactical, morphological, and/or phonological pattern. Below are illustrative examples of similar cases of pattern repetition together with their translations. In each of the following examples, we can find repeated patterns: some of them are linguistic stretches of speech that are parallel at the structural level, while others are parallel at both the structural and prosodic levels.

(1) ها هوذا القلم إذن [sic] .. الأكثر بوحاًوالأكثر جرحاً.(Mostaghanemi: 10)

Here is the pen then, at once an instrument of vibes and jibes. (Ahmar: 3)

(2) ما زلت أتساءل بعد كل هذه السنوات ، أين أضع حبك اليوم ؟ أفي خانة الأشياء العادية التي قد تحدث لنا يوماً كأية وعكة صحية أو زلة قدم .. أو نوبة جنون ؟ (Mostaghanemi: 14*)*

To this day, I still wonder after all these years how I should categorize your love. Is it in the list of ordinary things that may happen to any of us any day, like falling ill or tripping on the stairs or going crazy? (Ahmar: 6)

(3) كيف تصورتك تلبسين ثوبها العنابي، وتعجنين بهذه الأيادي ذات الأظافر المطلية الطويلة، تلك الكسرة التي افتقدت مذاقها منذ سنين؟ (Mostaghanemi:17)

How could I have imagined you wearing her dress, kneading dough with those long polished nails to make bread whose taste I'd missed for years? (Ahmar: 8)

(4) أم كنت تتلاعبين بالكلمات كعادتك، وتتفرجين على وقعها علي،وتسعدين سراً باندهاشي الدائم أمامك.(Mostaghanemi: 19)

Or maybe you were playing with words as usual, watching their influence on me and secretly enjoying my perpetual amazement. (Ahmar: 10)

After reviewing the previous Arabic examples and their English translations, we can notice that, in all the examples, the translator tries to maintain the style of pattern repetition at both the structural and prosodic levels. In example (1) there are two similar patterns: (الأكثر بوحاً) and (الأكثر جرحاً), the word (أكثر) is repeated twice in both phrases, and the words (بوحاً) and (جرحاً) have the same pattern of (فَعْلاً), and they end with the

same sound (ً) (n). Here, we have syntactic, morphological, and phonological parallelisms, which adds to the flavor to the text. The English translation does not include any repeated words. However, it maintains the phonological parallelism. The translator uses the two words (vibes) and (jibes) which end with the same sounds /z/. As a result, the prosodic effect is kept in the TT.

In example (2), there are three phrases which have nearly the same structure: (وعكة صحية) ، (زلة قدم)، and (نوبة جنون).The three words (نوبة، زلة، وعكة) have the same pattern of (فَعْلة). So, they also constitute a phonological parallelism. The translator was able to transfer the meaning as well as the structural and sound patterns. Moreover, her translation includes a sequence of the three present participle forms (falling, tripping, and going). Thus, the reader of the English version can notice a style of repetition that is nearly similar to the style of ST.

In example (3), the pattern repetition implies in the two verbs (تلبسين) and (تعجنين) as both have the same pattern of (تفعلين).The two verbs (تعجن) and (تلبس) share the same pattern which is (تفعل); the pronoun (ي) functions as a direct object of both verbs; and the final (ن) exists in both phrases. In her translation, Ahmar was able to render the meaning with the same style of the ST. She translates the sentence (تلبسين ثوبها العنابي) into (wearing her dress), and the sentence (تعجنين بهذه الأيادي ذات الأظافر

(المطلية الطويلة) into (kneading dough with those long polished nails), where (wearing) and (kneading) also have the same pattern.

The same analysis can be applied to example (4) where the two sentences (تتلاعبين بالكلمات كعادتك) and (تتفرجين على وقعها علي) have the same pattern, and, nearly, share the same grammatical structure which is (Verb + Pronoun (ي) + (ن) + prepositional phrase). In the English version, it is clear that Ahmar tried to maintain the style of pattern repetition. She could not produce totally parallel structures, but she produces similar patterns as she also maintains the prosodic similarity. She translated the sentence (تتلاعبين بالكلمات) into (playing with words), and the sentence (تتفرجين على وقعها) into (watching their influence). The two English phrases are nearly parallel.

The following two examples also include pattern repetitions, but they differ from the previous examples in the level of parallelism, as the pattern repetition in the following two examples is at the structural level, while there are no repetitions at the prosodic level.

(5) لا يتقن المراوغة ، ولا يعرف كيف توضع الظلال على الأشياء.
(Mostaghanemi: 10)

Here is an implement that doesn't know how to lie, ignorant of how to cloud the truth (Ahmar: 3)

In the above example, the two phrases (لا يتقن) and (لا يعرف) share the same structure. They are syntactically parallel, since both of them consist

of (لا) followed by a verb. The English translation includes pattern repetition, but it is not rendered literally as same as the ST, and it is not created through the phrases (لا يتقن) and (لا يعرف). The pattern repetition in the English sentence exists in the two phrases (how to lie) and (how to cloud). Both phrases have the same structure (how+ to+ the verb).

(6) غادرت قلبي اذن...كما يغادر سائح مدينة جاءها في زيارة سياحية منظمة. كل شيء موقوت فيها مسبقا، حتى ساعة الرحيل، و محجوز فيها مسبقا، حتى المعالم السياحية التي سيزورها، و اسم المسرحية التي سيشاهدها، و عنوان المحلات التي سيشتري منها هدايا للذكرى. (Mostaghanemi: 16)

So you left my heart the way a tourist leaves a city he visited on a package tour. Everything is scheduled in advance, even the hour of departure. Every detail is planned ahead of time, even the tickets for tourist attractions, the name of the play he is going to see, and addresses of the shops where he will buy his souvenirs. (Ahmar: 7).

In example (6) there are two repeated patterns, the first one exists in the following parallel stretches:

-موقوت فيها مسبقاً ،حتى ساعة الرحيل

- محجوز فيها مسبقا، حتى المعالم السياحية

It appears that the words (موقوت ومحجوز) are of the same pattern of (مفعول) and they also start with the same sound /m/. The phrase (فيها مسبقا) is repeated in both sentences, then the structure of (حتى + noun) is repeated in both sentences.

The second pattern exists in the following parallel stretches:

-المعالم السياحية التي سيزورها

- اسم المسرحية التي سيشاهدها

-عنوان المحلات التي سيشتري منها هدايا للذكرى .

The three sentences share the same structure which consists of (noun phrase+ relative pronoun (التي) + Verb in future tense).

Ahmar was successful in producing an English version that has a style similar to the style of the ST. She was successful in rendering the meaning and the style of pattern repetition. The two sentences: (كل شيء محجوز فيها مسبقاً، حتى ساعة الرحيل) and (موقوت فيها مسبقاً، حتى المعالم السياحية) were translated into: (Everything is scheduled in advance, even the hour of departure.), and (Every detail is planned ahead of time, even the tickets for tourist attractions) respectively. The English sentences are parallel at the structural level, both consist of (Subject+ passive form of the verb+ prepositional phrase) and the second part of the sentences consists of (even + noun + prepositional phrases).

On the other hand, the second repeated pattern is not rendered in the English translation.

(7) أتابع في نظرة غائبة ، خطواته المتجهة نحو المسجد المجاور . وما يليها من خطوات، لمارة آخرين ، بعضها <u>كسلى</u> وأخرى <u>عجلى</u> متجهة جميعها نحو المكان نفسه (Mostaghanemi:12)

I follow his steps with an absent-minded look as he heads to the nearby mosque, his and the steps of other passers-by<u>, some sauntering</u> and others <u>with a determined stride</u>, but all moving toward the same place. (Ahmar: 4)

(8) ومــن ينــاقش نيــرون يــوم أحــرق رومــا حبــاً لهــا ، وعشــقاً لشــهوة اللهــب .

(Mostaghanemi: 19)

Who debated with Nero the day he burned Rome down out of a passionate lust to gaze upon flames? (Ahmar: 10)

(9) ذات يوم.. لم يكن اجمل من عينيك سوى عينيك. فما اشقاني وما اسعدني بهما!

(Mostaghanemi: 17).

Once there was nothing more beautiful than your eyes, but how miserable I was to see them now; yet, I was also happy. (Ahmar: 7).

The above-mentioned three examples also include frequent pattern repetitions. However, their English versions do not have this type of repetitions.

In example (7) the two words (كسلى) and (عجلى) share the same pattern of (فَعْلى), they are morphologically parallel, but their English counterparts do not share the same features since the word (كسلى) is translated into (sauntering) and the word (عجلى) is translated into the prepositional phrase (with a determined stride).

In example (8) the two sentences (حباً لها) and (عشقاً لشهوة اللهب) have nearly parallel structures. Both phrases consist of a verbal noun followed by a prepositional phrase. The verbal nouns also share the same pattern of (فعْلاً). The English version does not include any similar structures; it does not even contain the translation of the verbal noun (حباً).

The researcher tries to translate example (8) in a way that conveys the meaning and maintains the style of pattern repetition at the same time. Below is the suggested translation:

Who could debate with Nero when he burned Rome because of his love and his passion of the lust of flames?

In example (9), there is a pattern repetition in the two parallel phrases (ما أشقاني) and (ما أسعدني). They have the same structure (The exclamation article (ما) + Verb + The pronoun (ي)). However, the TT does not include any type of repetition as the phrase (ما أشقاني) was translated into (how miserable I was), and the phrase (وما اسعدني) was translated into (I was also happy).

After all, in examples (1-6) the translator was successful in rendering the pattern repetition, while in the last three examples, she failed to render the style of repetition. The system of the English language might be the reason behind the lost of pattern repetition in the English version in some cases. For example, it may be difficult for the translator to find to words that are similar in their final sound like the two words (كسلى) and (عجلى). On the other hand, the researcher cannot find any reasons for not rendering the style of repetition in examples (8) and (9).The researcher have previously suggested another translation for example (8), and regard to example (9), the translator could have

translated the phrase (ما أسعدني) into (*how happy I was*) to be similar in its pattern to the phrase (*how miserable I was*).

3.3 Repetition through semantic elaborations:

This type of repetition includes semantic elaboration, and as indicated by Shunnaq (1989), it can be created by the same-word repetition or by the use of word-strings.

3.3.1 Same-word repetition:

This type of repetition can be also called "actual repetition" it includes the repetition of the same words in a stretch of speech. Below are some examples of same-word repetition including their English translations.

(1) وهنيئا للحب أيضا.. فما أجمل الذي حدث بيننا.. ما أجمل الذي لم يحدث.. ما أجمل الذي لن يحدث.(Mostaghanemi: 7)

Blessed also is the beauty of the true love we did have, and how beautiful, too, is what will never happen. (Ahmar: 1).

In this example, the three words (ما، أجمل، الذي) are repeated three times in the ST, and this repetition adds to the rhetoric and eloquence of the ST. As shown from the TT, Ahmar does not use any repeated words, but she rather attempted to render the meaning without focusing on the style of repetition. She even added to the meaning when she translated the relative pronoun (الذي) in the phrase (ما أجمل الذي حدث بيننا) into (the beauty

of the true love we did have). However, she does not maintain the style of implicitness which lies in the pronoun (الذي). Mostaghanemi does not clarify what she meant by the pronoun (الذي) as what Ahmar did, so the beauty of the SL was lost in the TT.

In addition Ahmar, ignored the phrase (الذي لم يحدث) in her translation. She focused on the two phrases (الذي حدث) and (الذي لن يحدث). The researcher tries to translate the above example in a way in which she maintains the style of repetition without ignoring any part of the Arabic sentence:

Blessed also is the true love. How beautiful that what happened between us, how beautiful is that what did not happen, and how beautiful is that what will never happen.

(2) عندما نقدر على النظر خلفنا دون حنين ، دون جنون ، ودون حقد ايضاً.

(Mostaghanemi: 7)

When we could look back free from nostalgia, madness, and grudge. (Ahmar: 1)

Here, the word (دون) is repeated three times, then followed by the nouns (حنين، جنون، حقد). In fact, there are two types of repetition in this example: repetition of pattern and same-word repetition. This adds to the flavor of the Arabic text. On the other hand, the English version does not have any kind of repetition as the translator rendered the word (دون) into (free from). She uses (free from) once, then by nouns (nostalgia, madness, and grudge.)

(3) أنــا الــذي لــم أختــر تلــك القصـــة، قصـــة كانـــت يمكــن أن لا تكــون قصـــتي (Mostaghanemi :9)

I didn't choose that story. It wouldn't have been mine at all had destiny not accidentally installed you at every turn of its chapters. (Ahmar: 2)

The word (قصـة) is repeated twice in this example. In the TT the word (story) is not repeated. Instead, the translator makes use of the pronoun (it) which refers to the word (story).

(4) وكيف غادرتني الحروف كما غادرتني قبلها الألوان. وتحول العالم الى جهاز تلفزيون عتيق، يبث الصور بالأسود و الأبيض فقط؟ (Mostaghanemi :9)

Why do the letters of the alphabet run away just in the way colors used to desert me before, turning my world into a black- and- white television that broadcasts prehistoric silent movies? (Ahmar: 2).

Here, the verb (غـادر) is repeated twice in the ST, but in the TT, Ahmar tended to use synonyms instead of repeating the same verb. She translated the verb (غـادر) into (run away) once, but into (to desert) in the other position. As a matter of fact, this does not affect the meaning of the text, and the English language has its specialty in using verbs as the implication of one verb cannot probably be used with another. However, the lovely style existed in the ST is lost in the TT.

(5) كنت احسدهم دائما، اولئك الرسامين الذين كانوا ينتقلون بين الرسم والكتابة دون جهد، وكـأنهم ينتقلـون مـن غرفـة الـى اخـرى داخلهـم. كـأنهم ينتقلـون بـين امـراتين دون كلفـة. (Mostaghanemi: 9)

I always envied those artists who switched effortlessly from painting to writing, simply as if they were moving from one compartment of the

mind to another, or shifting to a new woman without bidding farewell to the last. (Ahmar: 2).

This examples shows that the verb (ينتقلون) is repeated three times in the ST, while, like the previous examples, the English version does not have any repeated verbs. Ahmar used various verbs (switch, move, and shift) instead of using the same verb three times (as shown in the Arabic version).

(6) وها هي الكلمات التي حرمت منها، عارية كما أردتها، موجعة كما أردتها فلم رعشة الخوف تشل يدي، وتمنعني من الكتابة؟ (Mostaghanemi: 10)

Here are the words I have been deprived of, naked the way I wanted them, painful the way I desired them. So, why does the shiver of fear paralyze my hand and stop me from writing? (Ahmar: 3).

The phrase (كما أردتها) is repeated in the ST, while in the TT it is translated once as (I wanted them) and as (I desired them) in the other position. Here the translator was successful in rendering the meaning, but she does not maintain the style of same word repetition.

(7) مع صوت المآذن نفسه، وصوت الباعة. (Mostaghanemi: 11)

In the same call to prayers, the street cries of peddlers. (Ahmar: 4)

In the ST, the noun (صوت) is repeated exactly as it is, then it is followed by other nouns in the two phrases (صوت المآذن) and (صوت الباعة). On the contrary, there are no repeated nouns in the TT. Ahmar used the nouns (call and cry) to convey the meaning.

(8) عناوين كبرى.. كثير من الحبر الاسود كثير من الدم و قليل من الحياء. (Mostaghanemi: 15)

Hectares of big headlines and a lake of black ink, a lot of blood and so little sensitivity. (Ahmar: 15).

The same analysis also would also be applied to this example as the translator does not repeat the phrase (a lot of) to unify the style in both the TT and the ST which contains the repeated word (كثير). Instead, she uses the phrase (a lake of black ink) as a translation of the phrase (كثير من الحبر الاسود).

(9) ام تراك لبست هذا القناع، فقط لتروجي لبضاعه في شكل كتاب، أسميتها (منعطف النسيان)، بضاعه قد تكون قصتي معك.. وذاكرة جرحي؟ (Mostaghanemi: 17)

Or maybe you wore that mask only to promote written merchandise that you called The Turn of Oblivion, merchandise that could be the story of my life with you and the memory of my pain. (Ahmar: 8)

(10) فأحسد المأذن، وأحسد الأطفال الرضع، لانهم يملكون وحدهم حق الصراخ و القدرة عليه، قبل ان تروض الحياة حبالهم الصوتيه، وتعلمهم الصمت. (Mostaghanemi: 28)

So, I envy the minaret, and I envy newborn babies; only they have the right to scream and the ability to do it before life tames their vocal chords and teaches them silence.(Ahmar : 17)

(11) صامتا يأتي (سي طاهر) الليلة. صامتا كما يأتي الشهداء صامتا.. كعادته. (Mostaghanemi: 29)

Silent comes Si Taher tonight! Silent the way martyrs come! Silent as usual. (Ahmar: 17)

Examples (9, 10, and 11) differ from the previous eight examples in terms of the way they have been translated. The translator maintains the style of word repetition and tends to use repeated words instead of using synonyms, pronouns or other ways to convey the meaning.

In example 9, the word (بضاعة) is repeated in the ST, and the word (merchandise) is also repeated in the TT. The same thing happens in examples (10 and 11) where the words (أحسد) and (صامتاً) are repeated in the ST, and their English counterparts (envy) and (silent) are also repeated in the TT.

In the researcher's point of view, in example (10), a translator should choose another word instead of screaming even if it existed in the ST, because it is not acceptable at both moral and religious sides, to associate *screaming* with *minarets*. The word screaming gives negative meaning especially to the audience of the English text.

3.3.2 Repetition through the use of word-strings

As indicated previously, the term word-string refers to two or more lexical items strung together to form one group, showing the same meaning.

According to Shunnaq (1989), the use of word-strings may create semantic elaboration through the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs, and they may be divided into various groups. Below are some examples chosen from the examples quoted from *Dhakert AL-Jasad*, in addition to their English translations.

(1) يا شجرة توت تلبس الحداد وراثيا كل موسم. ياقسنطينه الأثواب.. ياقسنطينه الحب.. و <u>الأفراح و الاحزان</u> و الاحباب. أجيبيني أين تكونين الأن؟. (Mostaghanemi: 11)

You were Constantine's mulberry tree, every season in black. You were the city's love, its clothes, <u>its joys, its misery</u>, and its lovers. Tell me, where are you now? (Ahmar: 5).

(2) فالرموز تعرف دائما كيف تحيط نفسها بذلك الحاجز اللامرئي، الذي يفصل بين <u>العادي و الاستثنائي</u>، و <u>الممكن و المستحيل</u>، في كل شيْ. (Mosteghanem*:* 28).

Symbols always know how to surround themselves with that invisible shield that forms a separation between <u>the ordinary and the exceptional</u>, and between <u>the possible and the impossible</u> in everything. (Ahmar: 16).

(3) وأجبته <u>بفرح و بحزن</u> غامض معا (Mostaghanemi: 33*)*

I answered him with a mysterious blend of <u>happiness and sadness</u>. (Ahmar: 20)

(4) كانت تلك اول مره سمعت فيها اسمك.. سمعته وأنا في لحظة نزيف بين **<u>الموت</u>** و**<u>الحياة</u>**. (Mostaghanemi: 36)

That was the first time I ever heard your name. I heard it in a moment of bleeding between <u>life and death.</u> (Ahmar: 23)

(5) بين **<u>الابتسام</u>** و **<u>الحزن</u>**، يحدث اليوم ان استعيد تلك الوصية*.(*Mostaghanemi: 37)

Between <u>smiles and grief</u>, it happens that I recall these instructions today. (Ahmar: 23)

(6) كان الوطن في صيف 1960 بركانا <u>يموت ويولد</u> كل يوم. و تتقاطع مع <u>موته وميلاده</u>، اكثر من قصة، بعضها مؤلم و بعضها مدهش. (Mostaghanemi: 47).

The country in the summer of 1960 was a volcano<u>, dying and being reborn</u> every day, and with <u>its death and birth</u> there was a crossing of more than one story, some of them painful and some amazing. (Ahmar, p: 30).

(7) وربما لانه كان يتكبد يومها اكبر خساره بشرية ويفقد في معركة واحده عشرة من خيرة رجاله بين جرحى و قتلى. (Mostaghanemi: 35)

He was suffering from the biggest human loss yet, losing in a single battle ten of his best men among the wounded and killed. (Ahmar: 22).

(8) فابتلع قهوتي على عجل وأشرع نافذتي لاهرب منك الى السماء الخريفيه... الى الشجر و الجسور و المارة. (Mostaghanemi: 11)

I gulp the coffee down and throw the window open to escape from you to the autumn sky, to the trees and bridges and the passers. (Ahmar: 4)

All the underlined words in the previous examples form word-strings, in examples (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6), the word-strings are sets of contrary words or opposites. In her translation, Ahmar was able to render the meaning and maintain the style of repetition created through the use of word-strings.

In example (1), the two contrary words (أفراح) and (أحزان) are translated into (*joys) and* (misery), respectively. In example (2), the group of opposites (العادي و الاستثنائي، و الممكن و المستحيل) are translated literally as (the ordinary and the exceptional, and between the possible and the impossible). In example (3), (فرح) and (حزن) are rendered into (happiness) and (sadness) respectively.

The same way was followed by Ahmar in translating the word-strings in examples (4), (5), and (6). In example (4), she translated the words (الموت) and (الحياة) into (life) and (death). (الابتسام) and (الحزن) in example (5) are translated into (smiles) and (grief).In example (6), Ahmar

translated the two verbs (يموت) and (يولد) into (dying) and (being born), and the nouns (موت) and (ميلاد) are translated into (death) and (birth).

On the other hand, the underlined word-strings in examples (7) and (8) form a single group which can be divided into smaller parts. Furthermore, they show inclusiveness and unity. In example (7), the word-string which consists of (جرحى و قتلى) (wounded and killed) indicates totality, since they include all human losses during a war. In example (8), the words (الشجر والجسور والمارة) are successfully rendered into (the trees and bridges and the passers) and they could also be considered as one unit, as they refer to the things that could be found in a way or a road, and they could be joined as one team.

Chapter Four

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Summary

In this study, the researcher examined Alahmar's translation of 31 Arabic examples of functional repetition selected from the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's novel *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* into English. These examples were distributed into three groups (root repetition, pattern repetition, and repetition created through semantic elaboration) by following Shunnaq's (1989) categorization of functional repetition .After that, their English equivalents were examined and analyzed in light of their meanings , structures and styles in order to investigate whether the English versions maintain the style of repetition or not.

4.2 Conclusions

After analyzing the translation of 31 examples of functional repetition selected from the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad*, the following conclusions can be given:

1. The most frequent type of functional repetition in the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* is the same-word repetition.

2. The least frequent type of functional repetition in the first chapter of Mostaghanemi's *Dhakirt Al-Jasad* is the root repetition.

3. In her translation, Ahmar was not successful in rendering root repetitions as same as they exist in the ST. Instead, she tries to paraphrase

or use words that are not derived from the same root. She succeeded in conveying the meaning, but the aesthetic effect of the root repetition style was lost in the TT.

4. The style of same-word repetition was not fully maintained in the TT as same as the way it appears in the ST as the translator does not tend to use repeated words in her translation.

5. Ahmar was able to maintain the style of pattern repetition in most cases found in the selected chapter. The English version has a similar style to that Arabic since the translator tries to produce parallel English counterparts at the structural, grammatical or even prosodic levels.

6. Ahmar was able to maintain the style of repetition through the use of word-strings in most cases found in the selected chapter.

4.3. Recommendations:

Taking the previous conclusions into consideration, the researcher recommends that:

1. Future studies focus on other figurative language features such as: using the style of simile and metaphors, the style of paraphrasing, the style of long or short sentences or other features, in order to improve the productivity of the English Translator in all aspects.

2. Future researchers find another English version of the novel to study and compare with the current English one.

3. Future researchers make a general assessment to the whole novel not just the first chapter.

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Abstract in Arabic

المستخلص

ترجمة بارعة الأحمر لأسلوب التكرار الوظيفي في رواية *ذاكرة الجسد* لأحلام مستغانمي الى الانجليزية

اعداد

نيفين اسامة أبوالهيجاء

اشراف

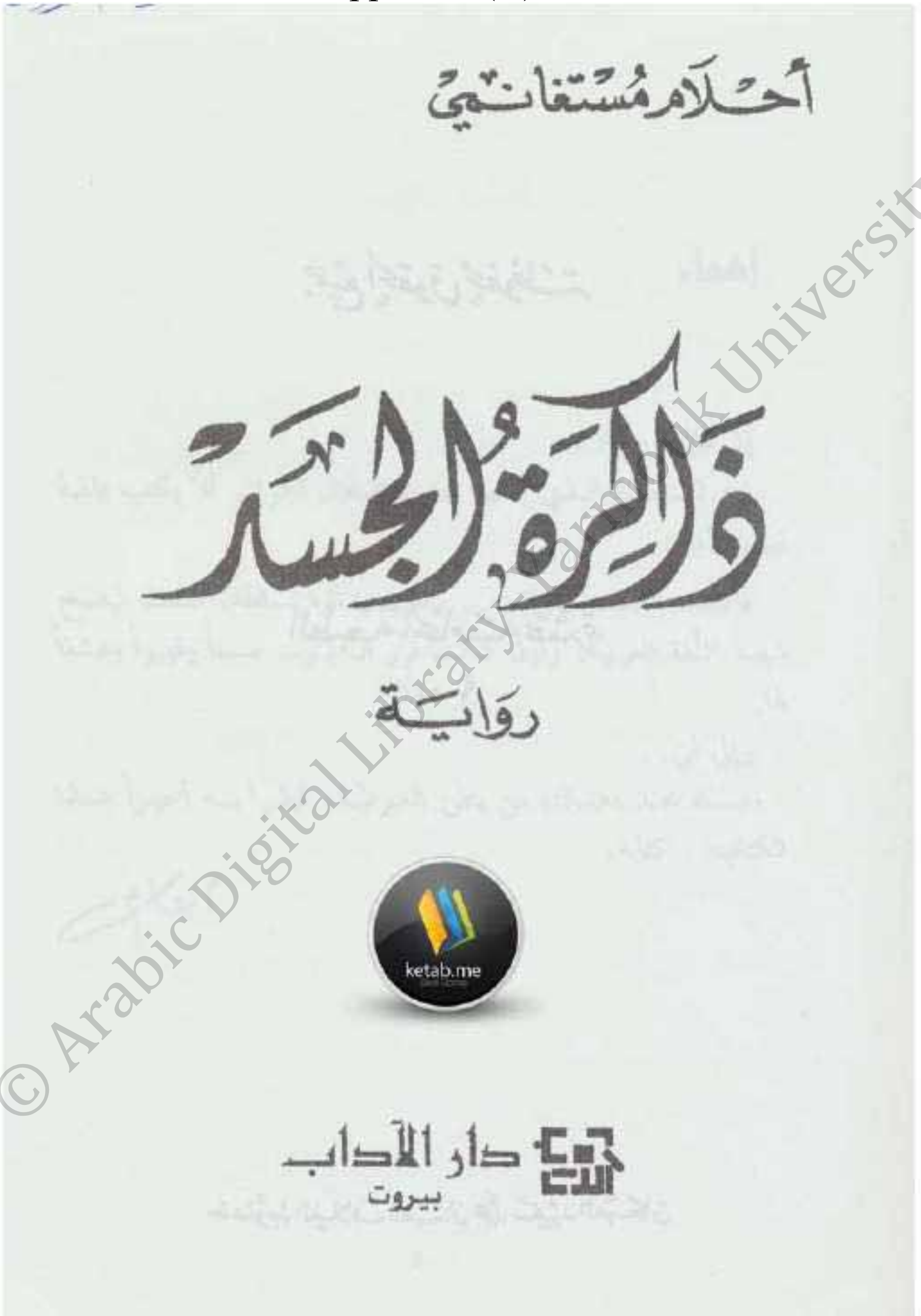
أ.د. عبد الله الشناق

2014

تهدف هذه الدراسة لتفحص ترجمة بارعة الأحمر لأسلوب التكرار الوظيفي في رواية ذاكرة الجسد لأحلام مستغانمي الى الإنجليزية وذلك للتعرف إلى النوعين الأكثر والأقل تكراراً من أنواع التكرار الوظيفي في الفصل الأول من هذه الرواية. و تهدف هذه الدراسة ايضاً الى معرفة ما اذا كانت المترجمة بارعة الأحمر ناجحة في نقل اسلوب التكرار الوظيفي في ترجمتها أم لا. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم اختيار (31) مثالاً لتوضيح التكرار الوظيفي مستقاة من الفصل الأول من الرواية و مصحوبة بترجماتها الإنجليزية، صنفت بالاستناد إلى تصنيف الشناق (1989) لأنواع التكرار الوظيفي، تم تقسيم الأمثلة المختارة الى ثلاث مجموعات : تكرار الجذر، و تكرار النمط ،والتكرار الوظيفي الناجم عن الصياغة الدلالية والذي تم تقسيمه أيضاً الى قسمين فرعيين هما: تكرار نفس الكلمة والتكرار الناجم عن استخدام سلاسل من الكلمات .قامت الباحثة بتحليل الأمثلة المختارة من خلال مقارنتها بنظيراتها باللغة الإنجليزية. أظهرت الدراسة أن النوع الأكثر تكراراً من أنواع التكرار الوظيفي في الفصل الأول من رواية ذاكرة الجسد لأحلام مستغانمي هو تكرار نفس الكلمة، بينما النوع الأقل تكراراً من أنواع التكرار الوظيفي هو تكرار الجذر . كما أظهرت الدراسة أن المترجمة بارعة الأحمر لم تكن ناجحة تماماً في الحفاظ على اسلوبي تكرار الجذر وتكرار نفس الكلمة خلال ترجمتها ، الا انها بالمقابل نجحت في الحفاظ على أسلوب تكرار النمط واسلوب التكرار الناجم عن استخدام سلاسل من الكلمات ،في معظم الأمثلة المختارة .

الكلمات الرئيسية: الترجمة، التكرار الوظيفي ، تكرار الجذر ، تكرار النمط ، التكرار الناجم عن الصياغة الدلالية.

Appendix (A)



الفصل الأول

ما زلت أذكر قولك ذات يوم:

«الحبّ هو ما حدث بيننا. والأدب هو كلّ ما لم يحدث».

يمكنني اليوم، بعد ما انتهى كلّ شيء أن أقول:

هنيئاً للأدب على فجيعتنا إذن فما أكبر مساحة ما لم يحدث. إنّها تصلح اليوم لأكثر من كتاب.

وهنيئاً للحبّ أيضاً..

فما أجمل الذي حدث بيننا.. ما أجمل الذي لم يحدث.. ما أجمل الذي لن يحدث.

قبل اليوم، كنت أعتقد أنّنا لا يمكن أن نكتب عن حياتنا إلاّ عندما نشفى منها.

عندما يمكن أن نلمس جراحنا القديمة بقلم، دون أن نتألّم مرّة أخرى.

عندما نقدر على النظر خلفنا دون حنين، دون جنون، ودون حقد أيضاً.

أيمكن هذا حقاً؟

نحن لا نشفى من ذاكرتنا.

ولهذا نحن نكتب، ولهذا نحن نرسم، ولهذا يموت بعضنا أيضاً.

ـ أتريد قهوة ؟

يأتي صوت عتيقة غائباً، وكأنّه يطرح السؤال على شخص غيري. معتذراً دون اعتذار، على وجه للحزن لم أخلعه منذ أيّام.

يخذلني صوتي فجأة..

أجيب بإشارة من رأسي فقط.

فتنسحب لتعود بعد لحظات، بصينيّة قهوة نحاسيّة كبيرة عليها إبريق، وفناجين، وسكّرية، ومرشّ لماء الزهر، وصحن للحلويات.

في مدن أخرى تقدّم القهوة جاهزة في فنجان، وضعت جواره مسبقاً ملعقة وقطعة سكّر.

ولكن قسنطينة مدينة تكره الإيجاز في كلّ شيء.

إنّها تفرد ما عندها دائماً. تماماً كما تلبس كلّ ما تملك. وتقول كلّ ما تعرف.

ولهذا كان حتّى الحزن وليمة في هذه المدينة.

أجمع الأوراق المبعثرة أمامي، لأترك مكاناً لفنجان القهوة وكأنّني أفسح مكاناً لك.

بعضها مسوّدات قديمة، وأخرى أوراق بيضاء تنتظر منذ أيّام بعض الكلمات فقط.. كي تدبّ فيها الحياة، وتتحوّل من ورق إلى أيّام.

كلمات فقط، أجتاز بها الصمت إلى الكلام، والذاكرة إلى النسيان، ولكن..

تركت السكّر جانباً، وارتشفت قهوتي مرّة كما عوّدني حبّك.

فكّرت في غرابة هذا الطعم العذب للقهوة المرّة. ولحظتها فقط،

شعرت أنّني قادر على الكتابة عنك فأشعلت سيجارة عصبيّة، ورحت أطارد دخان الكلمات التي أحـرقتني منـذ سنـوات، دون أن أطفئ حرائقها مرّة فوق صفحة.

هل الورق مطفأة للذاكرة ؟

نـترك فوقـه كلّ مـرّة رماد سيجـارة الحنين الأخـيرة، وبقايـا الخيبة الأخيرة. .

من منّا يطفئ أو يشعل الآخر؟

لا أدري. . فقبلك لم أكتب شيئاً يستحقّ الـذكـر. . معـك فقط سأبدأ الكتابة.

ولا بدّ أن أعثر أخيراً على الكلمات التي سـأنكتب بها، فمن حقّي أن أختار اليوم كيف أنكتب. أنا الذي لم أختر تلك القصّة.

قصّـة كان يمكن ألّا تكـون قصّتي، لو لم يضعـك القـدر كـلّ مـرّة مصادفة، عند منعطفات فصولها.

من أين جاء هذا الارتباك ؟

وكيف تطابقت مساحة الأوراق البيضاء المستطيلة، بتلك المساحة الشاسعة البياض للوحات لم ترسم بعد. . ومازالت مسندة على جدار مرسم كان مرسمي؟

وكيف غادرتني الحروف كما غادرتني قبلهـا الألوان. وتحـوّل العالم إلى جهاز تلفزيون عتيق، يبثّ الصور بالأسود والأبيض فقط ؟

ويعرض شريطاً قديماً للذاكرة، كما تعرض أفلام السينما الصامتة.

كنت أحسـدهم دائماً، أولئك الرسّـامين الـذين كانـوا ينتقلون بين

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الرسم والكتابة دون جهد، وكأنّهم ينتقلون من غرفة إلى أخرى داخلهم. كأنّهم ينتقلون بين امرأتين دون كلفة..

كان لا بدّ ألاّ أكون رجلاً لامرأة واحدة!

ها هوذا القلم إذن.. الأكثر بوحاً والأكثر جرحاً.

ها هوذا الذي لا يتقن المراوغة، ولا يعرف كيف توضع الظلال على الأشياء. ولا كيف ترشّ الألوان على الجرح المعروض للفرجة.

وها هي الكلمات التي حرمت منها، عارية كما أردتها، موجعة كما أردتها. فلِمَ رعشة الخوف تشلّ يدي، وتمنعني من الكتابة؟

تراني أعي في هذه اللحظة فقط، أنّني استبدلت بفرشاتي سكيناً. وأن الكتابة إليك قاتلة.. كحبّك.

ارتشفت قهوتك المرّة، بمتعة مشبوهة هذه المرّة. شعرت أنّني على وشك أن أعثر على جملة أولى، أبدأ بها هذا الكتاب.

جملة قد تكون في تلقائيّة كلمات رسالة.

كأن أقول مثلاً:

«أكتب إليك من مدينة مازالت تشبهك، وأصبحت أشبهها. مازالت الطيور تعبر هذه الجسور على عجل، وأنا أصبحت جسراً آخر معلّقاً هنا.

لا تحبّي الجسور بعد اليوم..».

أو شيئاً آخر مثل:

«أمام فنجان قهوة ذكرتك..

كان لا بدّ أن تضعي ولو مرّة قطعة سكّر في قهوتي. لماذا كلّ هذه الصينيّة.. من أجل قهوة مرّة..؟».

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كان يمكن أن أقول أي شيء. .

ففي النهاية، ليست الروايات سوى رسائل وبطاقات، نكتبها خارج المناسبات المعلنة. . لنعلن نشرتنا النفسيّة، لمن يهمّهم أمرنا.

ولذا أجملها، تلك التي تبدأ بجملة لم يتوقّعها من عايش طقسنا وطقوسنا. وربّما كان يوماً سبباً في كلّ تقلّباتنا الجوّيّة.

تتزاحم الجمل في ذهني. كلّ تلك التي لم تتوقّعيها.

وتمطر الذاكرة فجأة. .

فأبتلع قهوتي على عجل. وأشرع نافذتي لأهرب منك إلى السماء الخريفيّة. . إلى الشجر والجسور والمارّة.

إلى مدينة أصبحت مدينتي مرّة أخرى. بعدما أخذت لي موعداً معها لسبب آخر هذه المرّة.

ها هي ذي قسنطينة. . وها هو كلّ شيء أنت.

وها أنت تدخلين إليّ، من النافذة نفسها التي سبق أن دخلت منها منذ سنوات. مع صوت المآذن نفسه، وصوت الباعة، وخطى النساء الملتحفات بالسواد، والأغاني القادمة من مذياع لا يتعب. .

«يا التفّاحة. . يا التفّاحة. . خبّريني وعلاش الناس والعة بيك. .».

تستوقفني هذه الأغنية بسذاجتها.

تضعني وجهاً لوجه مع الوطن. تذكّرني دون مجال للشكّ بأنّني في مدينة عربيّة، فتبدو السنوات التي قضيتها في باريس حلماً خرافيّاً.

هل التغزّل بالفواكه ظاهرة عربيّة؟ أم وحده التفّاح الذي مازال

يحمل نكهة خطيئتنا الأولى، شهيّ لحدّ التغنّي به، في أكثر من بلد عربي.

وماذا لو كنت تفّاحة؟

لا لم تكوني تفّاحة.

كنت المرأة التي أغرتني بأكل التفّاح لا أكثر. كنت تمارسين معي فطريّاً لعبة حوّاء. ولم يكن بإمكاني أن أتنكّر لأكثر من رجل يسكنني، لأكون معك أنت بالذات، في حماقة آدم!

ـ أهلاً سي خالد.. واش راك اليوم..؟

يسلّم عليّ جار، تسلّقت نظراته طوابق حزني. وفاجأه وقوفي الصباحي، خلف شرفة للذهول.

أتابع في نظرة غائبة، خطواته المتّجهة نحو المسجد المجاور. وما يليها من خطوات، لمارّة آخرين، بعضها كسلى، وأخرى عجلى، متّجهة جميعها نحو المكان نفسه.

الوطن كلّه ذاهب للصلاة.

والمذياع يمجّد أكل التفّاحة.

وأكثر من جهاز هوائيّ على السطوح، يقف مقابلاً المآذن يرصد القنوات الأجنبيّة، التي تقدّم لك كلّ ليلة على شاشة تلفزيونك، أكثر من طريقة ـ عصريّة ـ لأكل التفّاح!

أكتفي بابتلاع ريقي فقط.

في الواقع لم أكن أحبّ الفواكه. ولا كان أمر التفّاح يعنيني بالتحديد.

كنت أحبّك أنت. وما ذنبي إن جاءني حبّك في شكل خطيئة؟

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كيف أنت. . يسألني جار ويمضي للصلاة.

فيجيبه لساني بكلمات مقتضبة، ويمضي في السؤال عنك.

كيف أنا؟

أنا ما فعلته بي سيّدتي. . فكيف أنتِ؟

يا امرأة كساها حنيني جنوناً، وإذا بها تأخذ تدريجيّاً، ملامح مدينة وتضاريس وطن.

وإذا بي أسكنها في غفلة من الزمن، وكأنّني أسكن غرف ذاكرتي المغلقة من سنين.

كيف حالك؟

يا شجرة توت تلبس الحداد وراثيّاً كلّ موسم.

يا قسطنطينية الأثواب. .

يا قسنطينية الحبّ. . والأفراح والأحزان والأحباب. أجيبي أين تكونين الآن؟.

ها هي ذي قسنطينة. .

باردة الأطراف والأقدام. محمومة الشفاه، مجنونة الأطوار.

ها هي ذي. . كم تشبهينها اليوم أيضاً. . لو تدرين!

دعيني أغلق النافذة!.

كان مارسيل بانيول يقول:

«تعوّد على اعتبار الأشياء العادية. . أشياء يمكن أن تحدث أيضاً».

أليس الموت في النهاية شيئاً عاديّاً. تماماً كالميلاد، والحبّ، والزواج، والمرض، والشيخوخة، والغربة والجنون، وأشياء أخرى؟

فما أطول قائمة الأشياء العادية التي نتوقّعها فوق العادة، حتى تحدث. والتي نعتقد أنّها لا تحدث سوى للآخرين، وأنّ الحياة لسبب

أو لآخر ستوفّر علينا كثيراً منها، حتّى نجد أنفسنا يوماً أمامها.

عندما أبحث في حياتي اليوم، أجد أنّ لقائي بك هو الشيء الوحيد الخارق للعادة حقّاً. الشيء الوحيد الذي لم أكن لأتنبّأ به، أو أتوقّع عواقبه عليّ. لأنّني كنت أجهل وقتها أنّ الأشياء غير العادية، قد تجر معها أيضاً كثيراً من الأشياء العاديّة.

ورغم ذلك..

مازلت أتساءل بعد كلّ هذه السنوات، أين أضع حبّك اليوم؟

أفي خانة الأشياء العادية التي قد تحدث لنا يوماً كأيّة وعكة صحيّة أو زلّة قدم.. أو نوبة جنون؟

أم.. أضعه حيث بدأ يوماً؟

كشيء خارق للعادة، كهديّة من كوكب، لم يتوقّع وجوده الفلكيون. أو زلزال لم تتنبّأ به أيّة أجهزة للهزّات الأرضيّة.

أكنتِ زلّة قدم.. أم زلّة قدر؟.

أقلّب جريدة الصباح بحثاً عن أجوبة مقنعة لحدث «عادي» غيّر مسار حياتي وجاء بي إلى هنا.

أتصفّح تعاستنا بعد كلّ هذه الأعوام، فيعلق الوطن حبراً أسود بيدي.

هناك صحف يجب أن تغسل يديك إن تصفّحتها وإن كان ليس للسبب نفسه كلّ مرّة. فهنالك واحدة تترك حبرها عليك.. وأخرى أكثر تألّقاً تنقل عفونتها إليك.

الآنّ الجرائد تشبه دائماً أصحابها، تبدو لي جرائدنا وكأنّها تستيقظ كلّ يوم مثلنا، بملامح متعبة وبوجه غير صباحيّ غسلته على عجل،

ونـزلت به إلى الشـارع. هكذا دون أن تكلّف نفسهـا مشقّة تصفيف شعرها، أو وضع ربطة عنق مناسبة.. إو إغرائنا بابتسامة.

٢٥ أكتوبر ١٩٨٨.

عناوين كبرى.. كثير من الحبر الأسود. كثير من الدم. وقليل من الحياء.

هناك جرائد تبيعك نفس صـور الصفحة الأولى.. ببـدلة جـديدة كلّ مرّة.

هنالك جـرائد.. تبيعـك نفس الأكاذيب بـطريقة أقـلّ ذكاء كـلّ مرّة..

وهنالك أخرى، تبيعك تذكرة للهروب من الوطن.. لا غير.

ومادام ذلك لم يعد ممكناً، فلأغلق الجريدة إذن.. ولأذهب لغسل يدي.

آخر مرّة استوقفتني فيها صحيفة جزائريّة، كـان ذلك منـذ شهرين تقريباً. عندما كنت أتصفّح مجلّة عن طريق المصادفة، وإذا بصـورتك تفاجئني على نصف صفحة بأكملهـا، مرفقـة بحوار صحـافي بمناسبـة صدور كتاب جديد لك.

يومها، تسمّر نظري أمام ذلك الإطار الذي كـان يحتويـك. وعبثاً رحت أفكّ رموز كلامك. كنت أقرأك مرتبكاً، متلعثماً، عـلى عجل. وكـأنّني أنـا الـذي كنت أتحـدّث إليـك عني، ولست أنت التي كنت تتحدّثين للآخرين، عن قصّة ربّما لم تكن قصّتنا.

أيّ موعد عجيب كان موعدنا ذلك اليوم! كيف لم أتوقّع بعد تلك السنوات أن تحجزي لي مـوعداً عـلى ورق بين صفحتـين، في مجلّة لا أقرأها عادة.

إنّه قانون الحماقات، أليس كذلك؟ أن أشتري مصادفة مجلّة لم أتعوّد شراءها، فقط لأقلب حياتي رأساً على عقب!

وأين العجب؟

ألم تكوني امرأة من ورق. تحبّ وتكره على ورق. وتهجر وتعود على ورق. وتقتل وتُحيي بجرّة قلم.

فكيف لا أرتبك وأنا أقرأك. وكيف لا تعود تلك الرعشة المكهربة لتسري في جسدي، وتزيد من خفقان قلبي، وكأنّني كنت أمامك، ولست أمام صورة لك.

تساءلت كثيراً بعدها، وأنا أعود بين الحين والآخر لتلك الصورة، كيف عدتِ هكذا لتتربّصي بي، أنا الذي تحاشيت كلّ الطرق المؤدّية إليك؟

كيف عدت.. بعدما كاد الجرح أن يلتئم. وكاد القلب المؤثّث بذكراك أن يفرغ منك شيئاً فشيئاً وأنت تجمعين حقائب الحبّ، وتمضين فجأة لتسكني قلباً آخر.

غادرت قلبي إذن..

كما يغادر سائح مدينة جاءها في زيارة سياحيّة منظّمة. كلّ شيء موقوت فيها مسبقاً، حتّى ساعة الرحيل، ومحجوز فيها مسبقاً، حتّى المعالم السياحيّة التي سيزورها، واسم المسرحيّة التي سيشاهدها، وعنوان المحلّات التي سيشتري منها هدايا للذكرى.

فهل كانت رحلتك مضجرة إلى هذا الحدّ؟

ها أنا أمام نسخة منك، مدهوش مرتبك، وكأنّني أمامك.

تفاجئني تسريحتك الجديدة. شعرك القصير الذي كان شالاً يلفّ وحشة ليلي.. ماذا تراك فعلت به؟

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أتوقّف طويلاً عند عينيك. أبحث فيهما عن ذكرى هزيمتي الأولى أمامك.

ذات يوم.. لم يكن أجمل من عينيك سوى عينيك. فما أشقاني وما أسعدني بهما!

هل تغيّرت عيناك أيضاً.. أم أن نظرتي هي التي تغيّرت؟

أواصل البحث في وجهك عن بصمات جنوني السابق. أكاد لا أعرف شفاهك ولا ابتسامتك وحمرتك الجديدة.

كيف حدث يوماً.. أن وجدت فيك شبهاً بأمّي. كيف تصوّرتك تلبسين ثوبها العنّابي، وتعجنين بهذه الأيدي ذات الأظافر المطليّة الطويلة، تلك الكسرة التي افتقدت مذاقها منذ سنين؟

أيّ جنون كان ذلك.. وأيّة حماقة!

هل غيّر الزواج حقّاً ملامحك وضحكتك الطفوليّة، هل غيّر ذاكرتك أيضاً، ومذاق شفاهك وسمرتك الغجريّة؟

وهل أنساك ذلك «النبيّ المفلس» الذي سرقوا منه الوصايا العشر وهو في طريقه إليك.. فجاءك بالوصيّة الحادية عشرة فقط.

ها أنت ذي أمامي، تلبسين ثوب الردّة. لقد اخترت طريقاً آخر. ولبست وجهاً آخر لم أعد أعرفه. وجهاً كذلك الذي نصادفه في المجلّات والإعلانات، لتلك النساء الواجهة، المعدّات مسبقاً لبيع شيء ما، قد يكون معجون أسنان، أو مرهماً ضدّ التجاعيد.

أم تراك لبست هذا القناع، فقط لتروّجي لبضاعة في شكل كتاب، أسميتها «منعطف النسيان» بضاعة قد تكون قصّتي معك.. وذاكرة جرحي؟

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وقد تكون آخر طريقة وجدتها لقتلي اليوم من جديد، دون أن تتركي بصماتك على عنقي.

يومها تذكّرت حديثاً قديماً لنا. عندما سألتك مرّة لماذا اخترتِ الرواية بالذات. وإذا بجوابك يدهشني.

قلت يومها بابتسامة لم أدرك نسبة الصدق فيها من نسبة التحايل:

«كان لا بدّ أن أضع شيئاً من الترتيب داخلي.. وأتخلّص من بعض الأثاث القديم. إنّ أعماقنا أيضاً في حاجة إلى نفض كأيّ بيت نسكنه ولا يمكن أن أبقي نوافذي مغلقة هكذا على أكثر من جثة..

إنّنا نكتب الروايات لنقتل الأبطال لا غير، وننتهي من الأشخاص الذين أصبح وجودهم عبئاً على حياتنا. فكلّما كتبنا عنهم فرغنا منهم.. وامتلأنا بهواء نظيف..».

وأضفت بعد شيء من الصمت:

«في الحقيقة كلّ رواية ناجحة، هي جريمة ما نرتكبها تجاه ذاكرة ما. وربّما تجاه شخص ما، نقتله على مرأى من الجميع بكاتم صوت. ووحده يدري أنّ تلك الكلمة الرصاصة كانت موجّهة إليه..

والروايات الفاشلة، ليست سوى جرائم فاشلة، لا بدّ أن تسحب من أصحابها رخصة حمل القلم، بحجّة أنّهم لا يحسنون استعمال الكلمات، وقد يقتلون خطأً بها أيّ أحد.. بمن في ذلك أنفسهم، بعدما يكونون قد قتلوا القرّاء.. ضجراً!».

كيف لم تثر نزعتك السادّية شكوكي يومها.. وكيف لم أتوقّع كلّ جرائمك التي تلت ذلك اليوم، والتي جرّبت فيها أسلحتك الأخرى؟

لم أكن أتوقّع يومها أنّك قد توجّهين يوماً رصاصك نحوي.

ولذا ضحكت لكلامك، وربّما بدأ يومها انبهاري الآخر بك. فنحن لا نقاوم، في هذه الحالات، جنون الإعجاب بقاتلنا!

ورغم ذلك أبديت لك دهشتي. قلت:

- كنت أعتقد أنّ الرواية طريقة الكاتب في أن يعيش مرّة ثانية قصّة أحبّها.. وطريقته في منح الخلود لمن أحبّ.

وكأنّ كلامي فاجأك فقلت وكأنّك تكتشفين شيئاً لم تحسبي له حساباً:

- وربّما كان هذا صحيحاً أيضاً، فنحن في النهاية لا نقتل سوى من أحببنا. ونمنحهم تعويضاً عن ذلك خلوداً أدبيّاً. إنّها صفقة عادلة.. أليس كذلك؟!

عادلة؟

من يناقش الطغاة في عدلهم أو ظلمهم؟ ومن يناقش نيرون يوم أحرق روما حبّاً لها، وعشقاً لشهوة اللّهب. وأنت، أما كنت مثله امرأة تحترف العشق والحرائق بالتساوي؟

أكنت لحظتها تتنبّأين بنهايتي القريبة، وتواسينني مسبقاً على فجيعتي..

أم كنت تتلاعبين بالكلمات كعادتك، وتتفرّجين على وقعها عليّ، وتسعدين سرّاً باندهاشي الدائم أمامك، وانبهاري بقدرتك المذهلة، في خلق لغة على قياس تناقضك.

كلّ الاحتمالات كانت ممكنة..

فربّما كنت أنا ضحيّة روايتك هذه، والجثّة التي حكمت عليها بالخلود، وقرّرت أن تحنّطيها بالكلمات.. كالعادة.

وربّما كنت ضحيّة وهمي فقط، ومراوغتك التي تشبه الصدق. فوحدك تعرفين في النهاية الجواب على كلّ تلك الأسئلة التي ظلّت تطاردني، بعناد الذي يبحث عن الحقيقة دون جدوى.

متى كتبتِ ذلك الكتاب؟

أقبل زواجكِ أم بعده؟ أقبل رحيل زياد.. أم بعده؟ أكتبته عني.. أم كتبته عنه؟ أكتبته لتقتليني به.. أم لتحييه هو؟
أم لتنتهي منّا معاً، وتقتلينا معاً بكتاب واحد.. كما تركتنا معاً من أجل رجل واحد؟

عندما قرأت ذلك الخبر منذ شهرين، لم أتوقّع إطلاقاً أن تعودي فجأة بذلك الحضور المُلحّ، ليصبح كتابك محور تفكيري، ودائرة مغلقة أدور فيها وحدي.

فلا كان ممكناً يومها، بعد كلّ الذي حدث، أن أذهب للبحث عنه في المكتبات، لأشتري قصّتي من بائع مقابل ورقة نقديّة. ولا كان ممكناً أيضاً أن أتجاهله وأواصل حياتي وكأنّني لم أسمع به، وكأنّ أمره لا يعنيني تماماً.

ألم أكن متحرّقاً إلى قراءة بقيّة القصّة؟

قصّتك التي انتهت في غفلة منّي، دون أن أعرف فصولها الأخيرة.
تلك التي كنت شاهدها الغائب، بعدما كنت شاهدها الأوّل. أنا الذي كنت، حسب قانون الحماقات نفسه، الشاهد والشهيد دائماً في قصّة لم يكن فيها من مكان سوى لبطل واحد.

ها هوذا كتابك أمامي.. لم يعد بإمكاني اليوم أن أقرأه. فتركته هنا على طاولتي مغلقاً كلغز، يتربّص بي كقنبلة موقوتة، أستعين بحضوره

الصامت لتفجير منجم الكلمات داخلي. . واستفزاز الذاكرة.

كلّ شيء فيه يستفزّني اليوم. عنوانه الذي اخترته بمراوغة واضحة. . وابتسامتك التي تتجاهل حزني. ونظرتك المحايدة التي تعاملني وكأنّني قارئ، لا يعرف الكثير عنك.

كلّ شيء. . حتى اسمك.

وربّما كان اسمك الأكثر استفزازاً لي، فهو مازال يقفز إلى الذاكرة قبل أن تقفز حروفه المميّزة إلى العين.

اسمك الذي. . لا يُقرأ وإنّما يُسمع كموسيقى تُعزف على آلة واحدة من أجل مستمع واحد

كيف يمكن لي أن أقرأه بحياد، وهو فصل من قصّة مدهشة كتبتها الصدفة، وكتبها قدرنا الذي تقاطع يوماً؟

يقول تعليق على ظهر كتابك إنّه حدث أدبي.

وأقول وأنا أضع عليه حزمة من الأوراق التي سوّدتها في لحظة هذيان. .

«حان لك أن تكتب. . أو تصمت إلى الأبد أيّها الرجل. فما أعجب ما يحدث هذه الأيّام!

وفجأة. . يحسم البرد الموقف، ويزحف ليل قسنطينة نحوي من نافذة للوحشة. فأعيد للقلم غطاءه، وأنزلق بدوري تحت غطاء الوحدة.

منذ أدركت أنّ لكلّ مدينةٍ الليل الذي تستحقّ، الليل الذي يشبهها والذي وحده يفضحها، ويعرّي في العتمة ما تخفيه في النهار، قرّرت أن أتحاشى النظر ليلاً من هذه النافذة.

كـلّ المدن تمـارس التعـرّي ليـلاً دون علمهـا، وتفضـحُ للغـربـاء أسرارها، حتى عندما لا تقول شيئاً.

وحتى عندما توصد أبوابها.

ولأنّ المـدن كالنسـاء، يحدث لبعضهنّ أن يجعلننـا نستعجل قـدوم الصباح. ولكن..

«Soirs, Soirs. que de soirs pour un seul matin..»

كيف تذكّرت هذا البيت للشاعر «هنري ميشـو» ورحت أردّده على نفسي بأكثر من لغة..

«أمسيات.. أمسيات

كم من مساء لصباح واحد»

كيف تذكّرته، ومتى تراني حفظته؟.. تراني كنت أتوقّع منذ سنين أمسيات بائسة كهذه، لن يكون لها سوى صباح واحد؟

أنقّب بعض الشيء في ذاكـرتي عن القصيـدة التي أخـذ منهـا هـذا البيت، وإذا بعنوانها «الشيخوخة»..

فيخيفني اكتشـافي فجـأة وكـأنّني أكتشف معه مـلامـح وجهي الجـديدة. فهـل تزحف الشيخـوخة هكـذا نحونـا حقّاً بليـل طـويـل واحد. وبعتمة داخليّة تجعلنا نتمهّل في كلّ شيء، ونسـير ببطء، دون اتجاه محدّد؟

أيكون الملل والضياع والرتابـة جزءاً من مـواصفات الشيخـوخة أم من مواصفات هذه المدينة؟

تـراني أنا الـذي أدخل الشيخـوخة.. أم تـرى الوطن بـأكمله هو الذي يدخل اليوم سنّ اليأس الجماعي؟

أليس هو الذي يملك هذه القدرة الخارقة، على جعلنا نكبر ونهرم في بضعة أشهر، وأحياناً في بضعة أسابيع فقط؟

قبل اليوم لم أكن أشعر بثقل السنين. كان حبّك شبابي، وكان مرسمي طاقتي الشمسيّة التي لا تنضب، وكانت باريس مدينة أنيقة، يخجل الواحد أن يهمل مظهره في حضرتها. ولكنّهم طاردوني حتّى مربّع غربتي، وأطفأوا شعلة جنوني.. وجاؤوا بي حتّى هنا.

الآن نحن نقف جميعاً على بركان الوطن الذي ينفجر، ولم يعد في وسعنا، إلّا أن نتوحّد مع الجمر المتطاير من فوهته، وننسى نارنا الصغيرة..

اليوم لا شيء يستحقّ كلّ تلك الأناقة واللياقة، الوطن نفسه أصبح لا يخجل أن يبدو أمامنا في وضع غير لائق!

لا أصعب من أن تبدأ الكتابة، في العمر الذي يكون فيه الآخرون قد انتهوا من قول كلّ شيء.

الكتابة ما بعد الخمسين لأوّل مرّة.. شيء شهواني وجنوني شبيه بعودة المراهقة.

شيء مثير وأحمق. شبيه بعلاقة حبّ بين رجل في سنّ اليأس، وريشة حبر بكر.

الأول مرتبك وعلى عجل.. والثانية عذراء لا يرويها حبر العالم!

سأعتبر إذن ما كتبته حتى الآن، مجرّد استعداد للكتابة فقط، وفائض شهوة.. لهذه الأوراق التي حلمت منذ سنين بملئها.

ربّما غداً أبدأ الكتابة حقّاً.

أحبّ دائماً أن ترتبط الأشياء الهامّة في حياتي بتاريخ ما.. يكون غمزة لذاكرة أخرى.

أغرتني هذه الفكرة من جديد، وأنا أستمع إلى الأخبار هذا المساء وأكتشف، أنا الذي فقدت علاقاتي بالزمن، أنّ غداً سيكون أوّل نوفمبر. . فهل يمكن لي ألاّ أختار تاريخاً كهذا، لأبدأ به هذا الكتاب؟

غداً ستكون قد مرّت ٣٤ سنة على انطلاق الرصاصة الأولى لحرب التحرير، ويكون قد مرّ على وجودي هنا ثلاثة أسابيع، ومثل ذلك من الزمن على سقوط آخر دفعة من الشهداء. .

كان أحدهم ذلك الذي حضرت لأشيّعه بنفسي وأدفنه هنا.

بين أوّل رصاصة، وآخر رصاصة، تغيّرت الصدور، تغيّرت الأهداف. . وتغيّر الوطن.

ولذا سيكون الغد يوماً للحزن مدفوع الأجر مسبقاً.

لن يكون هناك من استعراض عسكري، ولا من استقبالات، ولا من تبادل تهاني رسميّة.

سيكتفون بتبادل التهم. . ونكتفي بزيارة المقابر.

غداً لن أزور ذلك القبر. لا أريد أن أتقاسم حزني مع الوطن.

أفضّل تواطؤ الورق، وكبرياء صمته.

كلّ شيء يستفزّني الليلة. . وأشعر أنّني قد أكتب أخيراً شيئاً مدهشاً، لن أمزّقه كالعادة. .

فما أوجع هذه الصدفة التي تعود بي، بعد كلّ هذه السنوات إلى هنا، للمكان نفسه، لأجد جثة من أحبّهم في انتظاري، بتوقيت الذاكرة الأولى.

يستيقظ الماضي الليلة داخلي. . مربكاً. يستدرجني إلى دهاليز الذاكرة.

فأحاول أن أقاومه، ولكن، هل يمكن لي أن أقاوم ذاكرتي هذا المساء؟

أغلق باب غرفتي وأشرع النافذة. .

أحاول أن أرى شيئاً آخر غير نفسي. وإذا النافذة تطلّ عليّ. .

تمتدُّ أمامي غابات الغار والبلّوط، وتزحف نحوي قسنطينة ملتحفة ملاءتها القديمة، وكلّ تلك الأدغال والجروف والممرّات السرّيّة التي كنت يوماً أعرفها والتي كانت تحيط بهذه المدينة كحزام أمان، فتوصلك مسالكها المتشعّبة، وغاباتها الكثيفة، إلى القواعد السرّيّة للمجاهدين، وكأنّها تشرح لك شجرة بعد شجرة، ومغارة بعد أخرى.

إنّ كلّ الطرق في هذه المدينة العربية العريقة، تؤدّي إلى الصمود.

وإنّ كلّ الغابات والصخور هنا قد سبقتك في الانخراط في صفوف الثورة.

هنالك مدن لا تختار قدرها. .

فقد حكم عليها التاريخ، كما حكمت عليها الجغرافية، ألاّ تستسلم. .

ولذا لا يملك أبناؤها الخيار دائماً.

فهل عجبٌ أن أشبه هذه المدينة حدّ التطرّف؟

ذات يوم منذ أكثر من ثلاثين سنة سلكتُ هذه الطرق، واخترت أن تكون تلك الجبال بيتي ومدرستي السرّيّة التي أتعلّم فيها المادّة الوحيدة الممنوعة من التدريس. وكنت أدري أنّه ليس من بين خرّيجيها من دفعة ثالثة، وأنّ قدري سيكون مختصراً بين المساحة الفاصلة بين الحرّيّة. . والموت.

ذلك الموت الذي اخترنا له اسماً آخر أكثر إغراءً، لنذهب إليه دون خوف، وربّما بشهوة سرّيّة، وكأنّنا نذهب لشيء آخر غير حتفنا.

لماذا نسينا يومها أن نطلق على الحرّيّة أيضاً أكثر من اسم؟ وكيف اختصرنا منذ البدء حرّيّتنا.. في مفهومها الأوّل؟

كان الموت يومها يمشي إلى جوارنا، وينام ويأخذ كسرته معنا على عجل. تماماً مثل الشوق والصبر والإيمان.. والسعادة المبهمة التي لا تفارقنا.

كان الموت يمشي ويتنفّس معنا.. وكانت الأيّام تعود قاسية دائماً، لا تختلف عمّا سبقتها سوى بعدد شهدائها، الذين لم يكن يتوقّع أحد موتهم على الغالب.. أو لم يكن يتصوّر لسبب أو لآخر، أن تكون نهايتهم، هم بالذات، قريبة إلى ذلك الحدّ.. ومفجعة إلى ذلك الحدّ. وكان ذلك منطق الموت الذي لم أكن قد أدركته بعد.

مازلت أذكرهم، أولئك الذين تعوّدنا بعد ذلك أن نتحدّث عنهم بالجملة. وكأنّ الجمع في هذه الحالة بالذات، ليس اختصاراً للذاكرة، وإنّما لحقّهم علينا.

لم يكونوا شهداء.. كان كلّ واحد منهم شهيداً على حدة. كان هناك من استشهد في أوّل معركة، وكأنّه جاء خصيصاً للشهادة.

وهناك من سقط قبل زيارته المسروقة إلى أهله بيوم واحد، بعدما قضى عدّة أسابيع في دراسة تفاصيلها، والإعداد لها.

وهناك من تزوّج وعاد.. ليموت متزوّجاً.

وهناك من كان يحلم أن يعود يوماً لكي يتزوّج.. ولم يعد.

في الحروب، ليس الذين يموتون هم التعساء دائماً. إنّ الأتعس هم أولئك الذين يتركونهم خلفهم ثكالى، يتامى، ومعطوبي أحلام.

اكتشفت هذه الحقيقة باكراً، شهيداً بعد آخر، وقصّة بعد أخرى..

واكتشفت في المناسبة نفسها، أنني ربّما كنت الوحيد الذي لم يترك خلفه سوى قبر طريّ لأمّ ماتت مرضاً وقهراً، وأخٍ فريد يصغرني بسنوات، وأبٍ مشغول بمطالب عروسه الصغيرة.

لقد كان ذلك المثل الشعبي على حقّ «إنّ الذي مات أبوه لم يتيتّم.. وحده الذي ماتت أمّه يتيم».

وكنت يتيماً، وكنت أعي ذلك بعمق في كلّ لحظة. فالجوع إلى الحنان، شعور مخيف وموجع، يظلّ ينحر فيك من الداخل ويلازمك حتّى يأتي عليك بطريقة أو بأخرى.

أكان التحاقي بالجبهة آنذاك محاولة غير معلنة للبحث عن موت أجمل خارج تلك الأحاسيس المرضيّة التي كانت تملأني تدريجيّاً حقداً على كلّ شيء؟

كانت الثورة تدخل عامها الثاني، ويتمي يدخل شهره الثالث، ولم أعد أذكر الآن بالتحديد، في أيّة لحظة بالذات أخذ الوطن ملامح الأمومة، وأعطاني ما لم أتوقّعه من الحنان الغامض، والانتماء المتطرّف له.

وربما كان لاختفاء «سي الطاهر» من حيّنا بسيدي المبروك منذ بضعة أشهر، دور في حسم القضيّة، واستعجالي في أخذ ذلك القرار المفاجئ. فلم يكن يخفى على أحد أنّه انتقل إلى مكان سرّيّ في الجبال المحيطة بقسنطينة ليؤسّس من هناك مع آخرين إحدى الخلايا الأولى للكفاح المسلّح.

من أين عاد اسم (سي طاهر) اللّيلة ليزيد من ارتباكي، ومن منكما استدرجني للآخر؟.

من أين عاد.. وهل غاب حقّاً، وعلى بعد شارعين منّي شارع مازال يحمل اسمه؟

هناك شيء اسمه «سلطة الاسم».

وهناك أسماء عندما تذكرها، تكاد تصلح من جلستك، وتطفئ سيجارتك. تكاد تتحدّث عنها وكأنّك تتحدّث إليها بنفس تلك الهيبة وذلك الانبهار الأوّل.

ولذا.. ظلّ لاسم (سي طاهر) هيبته عندي. لم تقتله العادة ولا المعاشرة، ولم تحوّله تجربة السجن المشترك، ولا سنوات النضال، إلى اسم عاديّ لصديق أو لجار. فالرموز تعرف دائماً كيف تحيط نفسها بذلك الحاجز اللاّمرئي، الذي يفصل بين العادي والاستثنائي، والممكن والمستحيل، في كلّ شيء.

ها أنا أذكره في ليلة لم أحجزها له..

وبينما أسحب نَفَساً من سيجارة أخيرة، يرتفع صوت المآذن معلناً صلاة الفجر. ومن غرفة بعيدة يأتي بكاء طفل أيقظ صوته أنحاء كلّ البيت..

فأحسد المآذن، وأحسد الأطفال الرضّع، لأنّهم يملكون وحدهم حق الصّراخ والقدرة عليه، قبل أن تروّض الحياة حبالهم الصوتيّة، وتعلّمهم الصمت.

لا أذكر من قال «يقضي الإنسان سنواته الأولى في تعلم النطق، وتقضي الأنظمة العربيّة بقيّة عمره في تعليمه الصمت!».

وكان يمكن للصمت أن يصبح نعمة في هذه الليلة بالذات، تماماً

كالنسيان. فالذاكرة في مناسبات كهذه لا تأتي بالتقسيط، وإنّما تهجم عليك شلاّلاً يجرفك إلى حيث لا تدري من المنحدرات.

وكيف لك لحظتها أن توقفها دون أن تصطدم بالصخور، وتتحطّم في زلّة ذكرى؟

وها أنت ذا، تلهث خلفها لتلحق بماضٍ لم تغادره في الواقع، وبذاكرة تسكنها لأنّها جسدك.

جسدك المشوّه لا غير.

وتدري أنّ هناك من يلهثون الآن من منبر إلى آخر، بحجّة أو بأخرى، ليدينوا تاريخاً كانوا طرفاً فيه. عساهم يلحقون بالموجة الجديدة، قبل أن يجرفهم الطوفان. فلا تملك إلاّ أن تشفق عليهم.

ما أتعس أن يعيش الإنسان بثياب مبلّلة.. خارجاً لتوّه من مستنقع.. وألاّ يصمت قليلاً في انتظار أن تجفّ!

صامتاً يأتي (سي طاهر) اللينة.

صامتاً كما يأتي الشهداء.

صامتاً.. كعادته.

وها أنت ذا مرتبك أمامه كعادتك.

لقد كانت دائماً الخمس عشرة سنة التي تفصلكما، أكبر من عمر السنوات. كانت عمراً بحدّ ذاتها، ورمزاً بحدّ ذاتها، لرجل كان يجمع إلى جانب الفصاحة التي كان يتميّز بها كلّ من اختلط بجمعيّة العلماء، ودرس في قسنطينة، فصاحة أخرى.. هي فصاحة الحضور.

كان (سي طاهر) يعرف متى يبتسم، ومتى يغضب. ويعرف كيف يتكلّم، ويعرف أيضاً كيف يصمت. وكانت الهيبة لا تفارق وجهه

ولا تلك الابتسامة الغامضة التي كانت تعطي تفسيراً مختلفاً لملامحه كلّ مرّة.

«إنّ الابتسامات فواصل ونقاط انقطاع.. وقليل من الناس أولئك الذين مازالوا يتقنون وضع الفواصل والنقط في كلامهم»[1].

في سجن (الكديا) كان موعدي النضاليّ الأوّل مع (سي طاهر).
كان موعداً مشحوناً بالأحاسيس المتطرّفة، وبدهشة الاعتقال الأوّل، بعنفوانه.. وبخوفه.

وكان (سي طاهر) الذي استدرجني إلى الثورة يوماً بعد آخر، يدري أنّه مسؤول عن وجودي يومها هناك. وربّما كان يشفق سرّاً على سنواتي الست عشرة، على طفولتي المبتورة، وعلى (أمّا) التي كان يعرفها جيّداً، ويعرف ما يمكن أن تفعله بها تجربة اعتقالي الأوّل.
ولكنّه كان يخفي عنّي كلّ شفقته تلك، مردّداً لمن يريد سماعه: «لقد خلقت السجون للرجال».

وكان سجن (الكديا) وقتها، ككلّ سجون الشرق الجزائري يعاني فجأة من فائض رجولة، إثر مظاهرات ٨ ماي ١٩٤٥ التي قدّمت فيها قسنطينة وسطيف وضواحيها أوّل عربون للثورة، متمثّلاً في دفعة أولى من عدّة آلاف من الشهداء سقطوا في مظاهرة واحدة، وعشرات الآلاف من المساجين الذين ضاقت بهم الزنزانات، ممّا جعل الفرنسيّين يرتكبون أكبر حماقاتهم، وهم يجمعون لعدّة أشهر بين السجناء السياسيّين، وسجناء الحقّ العام، في زنزانات يجاوز أحياناً عدد نزلائها العشرين معتقلاً.

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(١) (*) الجمل المكتوبة بخط مميّز مأخوذة عن تواطؤ شعريّ من روايتي مالك حدّاد «سأهبك غزالة» و«رصيف الأزهار لم يعد يجيب».

وهكذا، جعلوا عدوى الثورة تنتقل إلى مساجين الحقّ العام الذين وجدوا فرصة للوعي السياسي، ولغسل شرفهم بالانضمام إلى الثورة التي استشهد بعد ذلك من أجلها الكثير منهم. ومازال بعضهم حتى الآن على قيد الحياة، يعيش بتكريم ووجاهة القادة التاريخيّين لحرب التحرير، بعدما تكفّل التاريخ بإعادة سجلّ سوابقهم العدليّة.. لعذريته الأولى. بينما وجد بعض السجناء السياسيّين ـ في تلك الحماقة الاستعمارية ـ فرصة للتعرُّف على بعض، ووقتاً كافياً للتشاور والتفكير في أمور الوطن.. والتخطيط للمرحلة القادمة.

اليوم.. عندما أذكر تلك التجربة، تبدو لي لكثافتها ودهشتها، وكأنّها أطول ممّا كانت. رغم أنّها لم تدم بالنسبة لي سوى ستّة أشهر فقط. قضيتها هناك قبل أن يطلق سراحي أنا واثنين آخرين لصغر سنّنا ولأنّه كان هناك من يهمّهم أمرهم، أكثر منّا.

وهكذا عدت إلى ثانويّة قسنطينة، بعدما أخلفت عاماً دراسيّاً، لأجد البرنامج نفسه وكتب الفلسفة نفسها والأدب الفرنسي في انتظاري..

وحدهم بعض رفاق الدراسة كانوا مايزالون ضمن المتغيّبين، بين مساجين وشهداء.

أغلبهم طلبة في الصفوف العليا التي كان مقرّراً أن تتخرّج منها أوّل دفعة من المثقّفين والموظّفين الجزائريّين المفرنسين.

وكان ذلك شرفهم، أولئك الذين راهن البعض على خيانتهم، فقط لأنّهم اختاروا الثانويّات والثقافة الفرنسيّة، في مدينة لا يمكن لأحد فيها أن يتجاهل سلطة اللّغة العربيّة، وهيبتها في القلوب والذاكرة.

فهل عجب أن يكون من بين الذين سجنوا وعذّبوا بعد تلك المظاهرات، الكثير منهم، هم الذين كانوا بحكم ثقافتهم الغربيّة يتمتّعون بوعيٍ سياسيٍّ مبكّر، وبفائض وطنيّة.. وفائض أحلام.

والذين أدركوا، والحرب العالميّة تنتهي لصالح فرنسا والحلفاء، أنّ فرنسا استعملت الجزائريّين، ليخوضوا حرباً لم تكن حربهم، وأنّهم دفعوا آلاف الموق في معارك لا تعنيهم، ليعودوا بعد ذلك إلى عبوديّتهم.

كان في مصادفة وجودي مع (سي الطاهر) في الزنزانة نفسها شيء أسطوري بحدّ ذاته، وتجربة نضاليّة ظلّت تلاحقني لسنوات بكلّ تفاصيلها، وربّما كان لها بعد ذلك أثر في تغيّر قدري. فهناك رجال عندما تلتقي بهم تكون قد التقيت بقدرك.

كان (سي الطاهر) استثنائيّاً في كلّ شيء، وكأنّه كان يعد نفسه منذ البدء، ليكون أكثر من رجل.

لقد خلق ليكون قائداً. كان فيه شيء من سلالة طارق بن زياد، والأمير عبد القادر، وأولئك الذين يمكنهم أن يغيّروا التاريخ بخطبة واحدة.

وكان الفرنسيّون الذين عذّبوه وسجنوه لمدّة ثلاث سنوات يعرفون ذلك جيّداً. ولكنّهم كانوا يجهلون أنّ (سي الطاهر) سيأخذ بثأره منهم بعد ذلك بسنوات، ويصبح الرأس المطلوب بعد كلّ عمليّة يقوم بها المجاهدون في الشرق الجزائري.

أيّ صدفة.. أن يعود القدر بعد عشر سنوات تماماً، ليضعني مع (سي طاهر) في تجربة كفاحيّة مسلّحة هذه المرّة!

سنة ١٩٥٥.. وفي شهر أيلول بالذات، التحقت بالجبهة.

كان رفاقي يبدأون سنةً دراسيّة ستكون الحاسمة، وكنت في عامي الخامس والعشرين أبدأ حياتي الأخرى.

أذكر أنّ استقبال (سي طاهر) لي فاجأني وقتها. لم يسألني عن أيّة تفاصيل خاصّة عن حياتي أو دراستي. لم يسألني حتّى كيف أخذت قرار التحاقي بالجبهة، ولا أيّ طريق سلكت لأصل إليه. ظلّ يتأمّلني قبل أن يحتضنني بشوق وكأنّه كان ينتظرني هناك منذ سنة.

ثمّ قال:

- جئت..!

وأجبته بفرح وبحزن غامض معاً:

- جئت!

كان (سي الطاهر) هكذا أحياناً، يكون موجزاً حتّى في فرحته؛ فكنت موجزاً معه في حزني أيضاً.

سألني بعدها عن أخبار الأهل، وأخبار (أمّا) بالتحديد، فأجبته أنّها توفيت منذ ثلاثة أشهر. وأعتقد أنّه فهم كلّ شيء، فقد قال وهو يربت على كتفي، وشيء شبيه بالدمع يلمع في عينيه:

- رحمها الله، لقد تعذّبت كثيراً.

ثمّ ذهب في تفكيره بعيداً إلى حيث لا أدري..

بعدها حسدت تلك الدمعة المفاجئة في عينيه، والتي رفع بها أمّي إلى مرتبة الشهداء. فلم يحدث لي أن رأيت (سي طاهر) يبكي سوى الشهداء من رجاله. وتمنّيت طويلاً بعد ذلك أن أمدّد جثماناً بين يديه، لأتمتّع ولو بعد موتي بدمعة مكابرة في عينيه.

ألكلّ هذا تقلّصت عائلتي فجأة في شخصه، ورحت أتفانى في

إثبات بطولتي له، وكأنّني أريد أن أجعله شاهداً على رجولتي أو على موتي؛ شاهداً على أنّي لم أعد أنتسب إلى أحد غير هذا الوطن، وأنّني لم أترك خلفي سوى قبر لامرأة كانت أمّي، وأخٍ يصغرني اختار له أبي مسبقاً امرأة ستصبح أمّه.

كنت ألقي بنفسي على الموت في كلّ مرّة، وكأنّني أتحدّاه أو كأنّني أريد بذلك أن يأخذني بدل رفاقي الذين تركوا خلفهم أولادهم وأهلهم ينتظرون عودتهم.

وكنت كلّ مرة أعود أنا ويسقط آخرون، وكأنّ الموت قرّر أن يرفضني..

وكان (سي طاهر) بعد أكثر من معركة ناجحة اشتركت فيها، قد بدأ تدريجيّاً يعتمد عليّ في المهمّات الصعبة، ويكلّفني بالمهمّات الأكثر خطورة، تلك التي تتطلّب مواجهة مباشرة مع العدوّ. ورفعني بعد سنتين إلى رتبة ملازم لأتمكّن من إدارة بعض المعارك وحدي، وأخذ القرارات العسكريّة التي يقتضيها كلّ ظرف.

بدأت وقتها فقط أتحوّل على يد الثورة إلى رجل، وكأنّ الرتبة التي كنت أحملها قد منحتني شهادة بالشفاء من ذاكرتي.. وطفولتي.

وكنت آنذاك سعيداً وقد بلغت أخيراً تلك الطمأنينة النفسيّة التي لا تمنحنا إيّاها سوى راحة الضمير.

لم أكن أعي وقتها أنّ طموحاتي لا علاقة لها بالمكتوب وأنّ القدر كان يتربّص بي في ذلك الوقت الذي كنت أعتقد فيه أن لا شيء بعد اليوم يمكن أن يعيدني إلى حزني السابق.

وجاءت تلك المعركة الضارية التي دارت على مشارف «باتنة» لتقلب يوماً كلّ شيء..

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فقد فقدنا فيها ستّة مجاهدين، وكنت فيها أنا من عداد الجرحى بعدما اخترقت ذراعي اليسرى رصاصتان، وإذا بمجرى حياتي يتغيّر فجأة، وأنا أجد نفسي من ضمن الجرحى الذين يجب أن ينقلوا على وجه السرعة إلى الحدود التونسيّة للعلاج. ولم يكن العلاج بالنسبة لي.. سوى بتر ذراعي اليسرى، لاستحالة استئصال الرصاصتين.
ولم يكن هناك من مجال للنقاش أو التردّد. كان النقاش فقط، حول الطرق الآمنة التي يمكن أن نسلكها حتّى تونس، حيث كانت القواعد الخلفيّة للمجاهدين.

وها أنذا أمام واقع آخر..

ها هو ذا القدر يطردني من ملجأي الوحيد، من الحياة والمعارك الليليّة، ويخرجني من السرّيّة إلى الضوء، ليضعني أمام ساحة أخرى، ليست للموت وليست للحياة. ساحة للألم فقط.. وشرفة أتفرّج منها على ما يحدث في ساحة القتال. فلقد بدا واضحاً من كلام (سي طاهر) يومها، أنّني قد لا أعود إلى الجبهة مرّة ثانية.

في ذلك اليوم الأخير، حاول (سي طاهر) أن يحافظ على نبرته الطبيعيّة، وراح يودّعني كما كان يودّعني كلّ مرّة قبل معركة جديدة. ولكن هذه المرّة كان يدري أنّه يعدّني لتحمّل معركتي مع القدر.

غير أنّه كان موجزاً على غير عادته، ربّما.. لأنّه ليس هناك من تعليمات خاصّة تعطى في هذه الحالات.. وربّما لأنّه كان يتكبّد يومها أكبر خسارة بشريّة ويفقد في معركة واحدة عشرة من خيرة رجاله بين جرحى وقتلى. وكان يدري، والثورة مطوّقة من كلّ جانب، قيمة كلّ مجاهد وحاجة الثورة إلى كلّ رجل على حدة.

ولم أقل له شيئاً ذلك اليوم..

كنت أشعر، لسبب غامض، أنّي أصبحت يتيماً مرّة أخرى.

كانت دمعتان قد تجمدّتا في عينيّ. كنت أنزف، وكان ألم ذراعي ينتقل تدريجياً إلى جسدي كلّه، ويستقرّ في حلقي غصّة. غصّة الخيبة والألم.. والخوف من المجهول.

كانت الأحداث تجري مسرعة أمامي، وقدري يأخذ منحىً جديداً بين ساعة وأخرى، ووحده صوت (سي طاهر) وهو يعطي تعليماته الأخيرة، كان يصل إليّ حيث كان، ليصبح صلتي الوحيدة مع العالم.

وبرغم ذلك، مازلت أذكر تماماً حضوره الأخير، عندما جاء يتفقّدني قبل سفري بساعة، ووضع ورقة صغيرة في جيبي وبعض الأوراق النقديّة، وقال وهو ينحني عليّ وكأنّه يودعني سرّاً:

«لقد وضعت في جيبك عنوان العائلة في تونس وشيئاً من الدراهم..» ثمّ تمتم:

«لو قدّر لك أن تصل إلى هناك.. أتمنّى أن تذهب لزيارتهم حين تشفى وتسلّم هذا المبلغ إلى (أمّا) لتشتري به هديّة للصغيرة، وأودُّ أيضاً أن تقوم بتسجيلها في دار البلديّة لو استطعت ذلك.. فقد يمرّ وقت طويل قبل أن أتمكّن من زيارتهم..».

وعاد بعد لحظات وكأنّه نسي شيئاً ليضيف شبه مرتبك وهو يلفظ ذلك الاسم لأوّل مرّة..

«.. لقد اخترت لها هذا الاسم... سجّلها متى استطعت ذلك وقبّلها عنّي.. وسلّم كثيراً على (أمّا)..»

كانت تلك أوّل مرّة سمعت فيها اسمك.. سمعته وأنا في لحظة نزيف بين الموت والحياة، فتعلّقت في غيبوبتي بحروفه، كما يتعلّق محموم في لحظة هذيان بكلمة..

كما يتعلّق رسول بوصيّة يخاف أن تضيع منه..
كما يتعلّق غريق بحبال الحلم.
بين ألف الألم وميم المتعة كان اسمك.
تشطره حاء الحرقة.. ولام التحذير. فكيف لم أحذر اسمك الذي ولد وسط الحرائق الأولى، شعلة صغيرة في تلك الحرب. كيف لم أحذر اسماً يحمل ضدّه ويبدأ بـ «أح» الألم واللّذة معاً. كيف لم أحذر هذا الاسم المفرد ـ الجمع كاسم هذا الوطن، وأدرك منذ البدء أنّ الجمع خلق دائماً ليقتسم!

بين الابتسام والحزن، يحدث اليوم أن أستعيد تلك الوصيّة:
«قبّلها عني..» وأضحك من القدر، وأضحك من نفسي، ومن غرابة المصادفات.

ثمّ أعود وأخجل من وقار صوته، ومن مسحة الضعف النادرة التي غلّفت جملته تلك، هو الذي كان يريد أن يبدو أمامنا دائماً، رجلاً مهيباً لا هموم له سوى هموم الوطن، ولا أهل له غير رجاله..

لقد اعترف لي أنّه رجل ضعيف؛ يحنّ ويشتاق وقد يبكي ولكن، في حدود الحياء، وسرّاً دائماً. فليس من حقّ الرموز أن تبكي شوقاً.
إنّه لم يذكر أمّك مثلاً.. تراه لم يحنّ إليها، هي العروس التي لم يتمتّع بها غير أشهر مسروقة من العمر وتركها حاملاً.
ولماذا هذا الاستعجال المفاجئ؟ لماذا لا ينتظر بعض الوقت ليرتّب قضيّة غيابه لأيّام، ويقوم هو نفسه بتسجيلك؟
لقد انتظر ستّة أشهر، فلماذا لا ينتظر أسابيع أخرى.. ولماذا أنا بالذات..

أيّ قدر جعلني أحضر إلى هناك بتوقيتك؟

كلّما طرحت على نفسي هذا السؤال، دهشت له وآمنت بالمكتوب.

فقد كان بإمكان (سي طاهر) برغم مسؤوليّاته أن يهرب ليوم أو ليومين إلى تونس. ولم تكن قضيّة عبور الحدود بحراستها المشدّدة ودوريّاتها وكمائنها لتخيفه، ولا حتّى اجتياز (خط موريس) المكهرب والمفروش بالألغام، والممتدّ بين الحدود التونسيّة الجزائريّة من البحر إلى الصحراء، والذي اجتازه فيما بعد ثلاث مرّات، وهو رقم قياسي بالنسبة لعشرات المجاهدين الذين تركوا جثثهم على امتداده.

أكان حبّ (سي طاهر) للانضباط، واحترامه للقوانين هو الذي خلق عنده ذلك الشعور بالقلق بعد ميلادك، وهو يكتشف عاجزاً أنّه أب منذ شهور لطفلة لم يمنحها اسماً، ولم يتمكّن حتّى من تسجيلها؟

أم كان يخاف، هو الذي انتظرك طويلاً، أن تضيعي منه إن هو لم يرسّخ وجودك وانتسابك له على ورقة رسميّة عليها ختم رسمي؟

أكان يتشاءم من وضعك القانوني هذا، ويريد أن يسجّل أحلامه في دار البلديّة، ليتأكّد من أنّها تحوّلت إلى حقيقة.. وأنّ القدر لن يعود ليأخذها منه، هو الذي كان حلمه في النهاية أن يصبح أباً كالآخرين بعد محاولة زواج فاشلة لم يرزق منها ذرّيّة؟

ولا أدري إذا كان (سي الطاهر) في أعماقه يفضّل لو كان مولوده صبيّاً.. أدري فقط، كما علمت فيما بعد، أنّه حاول أن يتحايل على القدر وأن يترك قبل سفره اسماً احتياطيّاً لصبي، متجاهلاً احتمال مجيء أنثى. وربّما فعل ذلك أيضاً بعقليّة عسكريّة، وبهاجس وطني دون أن يدري.. فقد كانت أحاديثه وخططه العسكريّة تبدأ غالباً بتلك الجملة التي كثيراً ما سمعته يردّدها «لازمنا رجال يا جماعة..»

إذن، لهذا كان (سي طاهر) يبدو سعيداً ومتفائلاً في كلّ شيء في تلك الفترة..

فجأة تغيّر الرجل الصلب. أصبح أكثر مرونة وأكثر دعابة في أوقات فراغه.

شيء ما كان يتغيّر تدريجيّاً داخله، ويجعله أقرب إلى الآخرين، وأكثر تفهّماً لأوضاعهم الخاصّة.

فقد أصبح يمنح البعض بسهولة أكثر تسريحات لزيارة خاطفة يقومون بها إلى أهلهم، هو الذي كان يبخل بها على نفسه. لقد غيّرته الأبوّة المتأخّرة، التي جاءت رمزاً جاهزاً لمستقبل أجمل..

معجزة صغيرة للأمل.. كانت أنتِ.

طلع صباح آخر. .

وها هو ذا النهار يفاجئني بضجيجه الاعتيادي، وبضوئه المباغت الذي يدخل النور إلى أعماقي غصباً عنّي، فأشعر أنّه يختلس شيئاً منّي.

في هذه اللحظة. . أكره هذا الجانب الفضوليّ والمحرج للشمس.

أريد أن أكتب عنك في العتمة. قصّتي معك شريط مصورّ أخاف أن يحرقه الضوء ويلغيه، لأنّك امرأة نبتت في دهاليزي السرّيّة. .

لأنّك امرأة امتلكتها بشرعيّة السرّيّة. .

لا بدّ أن أكتب عنك بعد أن أسدل كلّ الستائر، وأغلق نوافذ غرفتي.

ورغم ذلك. . يسعدني في هذه اللحظة منظر الأوراق المكدّسة أمامي، والتي ملأتها البارحة، في ليلة نذرتها للجنون. فقد أهديها لك مغلّفة بصورة مهذّبة في كتاب. .

وأدري. .

أدري أنّك تكرهين الأشياء المهذّبة جدّاً. . وأنّك أنانيّة جدّاً. . وأن لا شيء يعنيك في النهاية، خارج حدودك أنت. . وجسدك أنت.

ولكن قليلاً من الصبر سيّدتي.

صفحات أخرى فقط. . ثمّ أعرّي أمامك ذاكرتي الأخرى. صفحات أخرى لا بدّ منها، قبل أن أملأك غروراً. . وشهوة. .

ونـدماً وجنـوناً. فـالكتب كوجبـات الحبّ. . لا بدّ لهـا من مقدّمـات أيضاً. . وإن كنت أعترف أنّ «المقـدّمات» ليست مشكلتي الآن بقـدر ما يربكني البحث عن منطلق لهذه القصّة.

من أين أبدأ قصّتي معك؟

ولقصّتك معي عدّة بدايات، تبدأ مع النهـايات غـير المتوقّعـة ومع مقالب القدر.

وعندما أتحدّث عنك. . عمّن تراني أتحدّث؟ أعن طفلة كانت تحبو يـومـاً عنـد قـدمي. . أم عن صبيّـة قلبت بعـد خمس وعشرين سنـة حيـاتي. . أم عن امـرأة تكـاد تشبهـك، أتـأمّلهـا عـلى غـلاف كتـاب أنيق عنوانه «منعطف النسيان». . وأتسـاءل: أتراها حقّاً. . أنتِ؟

وعندما أسمّيك فبأيّ اسم؟

تُـرى أدعـوك بـذلـك الاسم الـذي أراده والـدك، وذهبت بنفسي لأسجّله نيابة عنه في سجلّات البلديّة، أم باسمك الأوّل، ذلك الذي حَمَلْتِه خلال ستّة أشهر في انتظار اسم شرعيّ آخر ؟

«حياة». .

سـأدعوك هكـذا. . ليـس هذا اسمـك على كـلّ حـال. إنّـه أحـد أسمائك فقط. . فلأسمينّك بـه إذن مادام هـذا الاسم الذي عـرفتك به، والاسم الذي أنفرد بمعرفته. اسمك غـير المتداول عـلى الألسنة، وغير المسجّل عـلى صفحات الكتب والمجـلّات، ولا في أيّ سجلّات رسميّة.

الاسم الذي مُنحته لتعيشي وليمنحك الله الحياة. والذي قتلته أنـا ذات يوم، وأنا أمنحك اسماً رسميّاً آخر، ومن حقّي أن أحييه اليوم، لأنّه لي ولم يُنَادِكِ رجل قبلي به.

اسمك الطفولي الذي يحبو على لساني، وكأنك أنت منذ خمس وعشرين سنة. وكلّما لفظته، عدت طفلة تجلس على ركبتي وتعبث بأشيائي وتقول لي كلاماً لا أفهمه..

فأغفر لك لحظتها كلّ خطاياك.

كلّما لفظته تدحرجت إلى الماضي، وعدت صغيرة في حجم دمية.. وإذا بك ابنتي.

هل أقرأ كتابك لأعرف كيف تحوّلت تلك الطفلة الصغيرة إلى امرأة؟ ولكنّني أعرف مسبقاً أنك لن تكتبي عن طفولتك.. ولا عن سنواتك الأولى.

أنت تملئين ثقوب الذاكرة الفارغة بالكلمات فقط، وتتجاوزين الجراح بالكذب، وربّما كان هذا سرّ تعلّقك بي؛ أنا الذي أعرف الحلقة المفقودة من عمرك، وأعرف ذلك الأب الذي لم تريه سوى مرّات قليلة في حياتك، وتلك المدينة التي كنت تسكنينها ولا تسكنك، وتعاملين أزقّتها دون عشق، وتمشين وتجيئين على ذاكرتها دون انتباه.

أنت التي تعلّقتِ بي لتكتشفي ما تجهلينه.. وأنا الذي تعلّقت بك لأنسى ما كنت أعرفه.. أكان ممكناً لحبّنا أن يدوم؟

كان (سي طاهر) طرفاً ثالثاً في قصّتنا منذ البدء حتى عندما لا نتحدّث عنه، كان بيننا حاضراً بغيابه، فهل أقتله مرّة ثانية لأنفرد بك؟

آه لو تدرين.. لو تدرين ما أثقل حمل الوصايا، حتى بعد ربع قرن، وما أوجع الشهوة التي يواجهها أكثر من مستحيل وأكثر من مبدأ فلا يزيدها في النهاية إلاّ... اشتهاء!

كان السؤال منذ البداية. .

كيف لي أن ألغي (سي طاهر) من ذاكرتي، وألغي عمره من عمري، لأمنح حبّنا فرصة ولادة طبيعيّة؟

ولكن. . ما الذي سيبقى وقتها، لو أخرجتك من ذاكرتنا المشتركة وحوّلتك إلى فتاة عاديّة؟

كان والدك رفيقاً فوق العادة. . وقائداً فوق العادة.

كان استثنائيّاً في حياته وفي موته. فهل أنسى ذلك؟

لم يكن من المجاهدين الذين ركبوا الموجة الأخيرة، ليضمنوا مستقبلهم، مجاهدي (٦٢) وأبطال المعارك الأخيرة. ولا كان من شهداء المصادفة، الذين فاجأهم الموت في قصف عشوائي، أو في رصاصة خاطئة.

كان من طينة ديدوش مراد، ومن عجينة العربي بن مهيدي، ومصطفى بن بولعيد، الذين كانوا يذهبون إلى الموت ولا ينتظرون أن يأتيهم.

فهل أنسى أنّه والدك. . وسؤالك الدائم يعيد لاسمه هيبته حيّاً وشهيداً؟

فيرتبك القلب الذي أحبّك حدّ الجنون. ويبقى صدى سؤالك ماثلاً. . . «حدّثني عنه. .»

سأحدّثك عنه حبيبتي. . فلا أسهل من الحديث عن الشهداء. تاريخهم جاهز ومعروف مسبقاً كخاتمتهم. ونهايتهم تغفر لهم ما يمكن أن يكونوا قد ارتكبوا من أخطاء.

سأحدّثك عن (سي طاهر). .

فوحده تاريخ الشهداء قابل للكتابة، وما تلاه تاريخ آخر يصادره

الأحياء. وسيكتبه جيل لم يعرف الحقيقة ولكنّه سيستنتجها تلقائيّاً. . فهناك علامات لا تخطئْ.

مات (سي طاهر) طاهراً على عتبات الاستقلال. لا شيء في يده غير سلاحه. لا شيء في جيوبه غير أوراق لا قيمة لها. . لا شيء على أكتافه سوى وسام الشهادة.

الرموز تحمل قيمتها في موتها. .

ووحدهم الذين ينوبون عنهم، يحملون قيمتهم في رتبهم وأوسمتهم الشرفيّة، وما ملأوا به جيوبهم على عجل من حسابات سرّيّة.

ستّ ساعات من الحصار والتطويق، ومن القصف المركّز لدشرة بأكملها ليتمكّن قتلته من نشر صورته على صفحات جرائد الغد كدليل على انتصاراتهم الساحقة على أحد المخرّبين و«الفلاّقة» الذين أقسمت فرنسا أن تأتي عليهم. .

أكان حقّاً موت ذلك الرجل البسيط انتصاراً لقوّة عظمى، كانت ستخسر بعد بضعة أشهر الجزائر بأكملها؟!

استشهد هكذا في صيف ١٩٦٠، دون أن يتمتّع بالنصر ولا بقطف ثماره.

ها هو رجل أعطى الجزائر كلّ شيء، ولم تعطه حتّى فرصة أن يرى ابنه يمشي إلى جواره. .

أو يراك أنت ربّما طبيبة أو أستاذة كما كان يحلم.

كم أحبّك ذلك الرجل!

بجنون أبوّة الأربعين. . بحنان الذي كان يخفي خلف صرامته الكثير من الحنان، بأحلام الذي صودرت منه الأحلام، بزهو المجاهد

الذي أدرك وهو يرى مولده الأول، أنّه لن يموت تماماً بعد اليوم.

ما زلت أذكر المسرّات القليلة التي كان يحضر فيها إلى تونس لزيارتكم خلسة ليوم واحد أو ليومين.

وكنت وقتها أسرع إليه متلهّفاً لسماع آخر الأخبار، وتطوّرات الأحداث على الجبهة. وأنا أجهد نفسي في الوقت نفسه حتّى لا أسرق منه تلك الساعات القليلة النادرة، التي كان يغامر بحياته ليقضيها برفقة عائلته الصغيرة.

كنت أندهش وقتها، وأنا أكتشف فيه رجلاً آخر لا أعرفه.

رجلٌ بثياب أخرى، بابتسامة وكلمات أخرى، وبجلسة يسهل له فيها إجلاسك على ركبتيه طوال الوقت لملاعبتك.

كان يعيش كلّ لحظة بأكملها، وكأنّه يعتصر من الزمن الشحيح كلّ قطرات السعادة؛ وكأنّه يسرق من العمر مسبقاً، ساعات يعرفها معدودة؛ ويمنحك مسبقاً من الحنان زادك لعمر كامل.

كانت آخر مرّة رأيته فيها، في يناير سنة ١٩٦٠. وكان حضر ليشهد أهمّ حدث في حياته؛ ليتعرّف على مولوده الثاني «ناصر»، فقد كانت أمنيته السرّيّة أن يُرزق يوماً بذكر. يومها لسبب غامض تأمّلته كثيراً.. وحدّثته قليلاً.. وفضّلت أن أتركه لفرحته تلك، ولسعادته المسروقة. وعندما عدت في الغد، قيل لي إنّه عاد إلى الجبهة على عجل مؤكّداً أنّه سيعود قريباً لمدّة أطول.

ولم يعد..

انتهى بعد ذلك كرم القدر البخيل. فقد استشهد (سي طاهر) بعد بضعة أشهر دون أن يتمكّن من رؤية ابنه مرّة ثانية.

كان ناصر آنذاك ينهي شهره الثامن، وأنت تدخلين عامك الخامس.

وكان الوطن في صيف ١٩٦٠ بركاناً يموت ويولد كلّ يوم. وتتقاطع مع موته وميلاده، أكثر من قصّة، بعضها مؤلم وبعضها مدهش..

وبعضها يأتي متأخّراً كما جاءت قصّتي التي تقاطعت يومها معك.

قصّة فرعيّة، كتبت مسبقاً وحوّلت مسار حياتي بعد عمر بأكمله، بحكم شيء قد يكون اسمه القدر، وقد يكون العشق الجنوني..

ذاك الذي يفاجئنا من حيث لا نتوقّع، مُتجاهلاً كلّ مبادئنا وقيمنا السابقة.

والذي يأتي هكذا متأخّراً.. في تلك اللحظة التي لا نعود ننتظر فيها شيئاً، وإذا به يقلب فينا كلّ شيء.

فهل يمكن لي اليوم، بعدما قطعت بيننا الأيام جسور الكلام، أن أقاوم هذه الرغبة الجنونيّة لكتابة هاتين القصّتين معاً، كما عشتهما معك ودونك، بعد ذلك بسنوات..

رغبةً.. وعشقاً.. وحلماً.. وحقداً.. وغيرةً.. وخيبةً.. وفجائع حدّ الموت.

أنت التي كنت تحبّين الاستماع إليّ..

وتقلبينني كدفتر قديم للدهشة.

كان لا بدّ أن أكتب من أجلك هذا الكتاب، لأقول لك ما لم أجد متّسعاً من العمر لأقوله.

سأحدّثك عن الذين أحبّوك لأسباب مختلفة، وخنتهم لأسباب مختلفة أخرى.

سأحدّثك حتّى عن زياد، أما كنت تحبّين الحديث عنه وتراوغين؟

لم يعد من ضرورة الآن للمراوغة.. لقد اختار كلّ منا قدره.

سأحدّثك عن تلك المدينة التي كانت طرفاً في حبّنا، والتي أصبحت بعد ذلك سبباً في فراقنا، وانتهى فيها مشهد خرابنا الجميل.

فعمّ تراك ستحدّثين؟

عن أيّ رجل منّا تراك كتبت؟ مَنْ منّا أحببت؟

ومن.. منّا ستقتلين؟

ولمن تراك أخلصت، أنت التي تستبدلين حبّاً بحبّ، وذاكرة بأخرى، ومستحيلاً بمستحيل؟

وأين أنا في قائمة عشقك وضحاياك؟

تراني أشغل المكانة الأولى، لأنّني أقرب إلى النسخة الأولى؟

تراني النسخة المزوّرة لـ(سي طاهر) تلك التي لم يحوّلها الاستشهاد إلى نسخة طبق الأصل؟

تراني الأبوّة المزوّرة.. أم الحبّ المزوّر؟

أنت التي ـ كهذا الوطن ـ تحترفين تزوير الأوراق وقلبها.. دون جهد.

كان «مونتيرلان» يقول:

«إذا كنت عاجزاً عن قتل من تدّعي كراهيته، فلا تقل إنّك تكرهه: أنت تعهّر هذه الكلمة!».

دعيني أعترف لك أنّي في هذه اللحظة أكرهك، وأنّه كان لا بدّ أن أكتب هذا الكتاب لأقتلك به أيضاً. دعيني أجرّب أسلحتك..

فربّما كنت على حق.. ماذا لو كانت الروايات مسدّسات محشوّة بالكلمات القاتلة لا غير؟.

ولو كانت الكلمات رصاصاً أيضاً؟

ولكنّي لن أستعمل معك مسدّساً بكاتم صوت، على طريقتك.

لا يمكن لرجل يحمل السلاح بعد هذا العمر، أن يأخذ كلّ هذه الاحتياطات.

أريد لموتك وقعاً مدوياً قدر الإمكان..

فأنا أقتل معك أكثر من شخص، كان لا بدّ أن يجرؤ أحد على إطلاق النار عليهم يوماً.

فاقرأي هذا الكتاب حتّى النهاية، بعدها قد تكفّين عن كتابة الروايات الوهميّة.

وطالعي قصّتنا من جديد..

دهشة بعد أخرى، وجرحاً بعد آخر، فلم يحدث لأدبنا التعيس هذا، أن عرف قصّة أروع منها..

ولا شهد خراباً أجمل.

Appendix (B)

Memory
in the
Flesh

Translator's Note

The success and special charm of this remarkable book—which explores the nostalgia, love, and disappointments of the artist Khaled, torn between the two parting cultures of France and Algeria—can, essentially, be due only in part to its translation. The bridges I crossed were equaled by the soaring and plummeting of emotions as I struggled to interpret Ahlam's message through my own memories and amputations. The difficulty of reflecting in translation the contrast between the two forms of Arabic, the classical and the Algerian, means that one cannot truly convey all the intricacies of the story—but its originality and special charm are yet captured.

The original Arabic edition is now a bestseller in the Arab world, after fourteen reprintings, and it is currently being developed into a movie.

I was blessed during the many hours of this long work with the support of dear and encouraging friends, and most of all by the love of my two children Kristina and Keven.

1

I still remember you saying one day, "What happened between us was real love; what didn't happen was the stuff of love stories." Today, since it's all over, I can say, "In that case, the literary account of our disaster is much blessed. However, what didn't happen is immense, so vast that it may fill volumes. Blessed also is the beauty of the true love we did have, and how beautiful, too, is what will never happen."

Before, I thought that we could write about life only when we were healed from its wounds; when we were able to touch the old sores with a pen and not revive the pain; when we could look back free from nostalgia, madness, and grudge.

But is this really possible? We are never completely cured from our memory. Recollection provides the inspiration for writing, the stimulus for drawing, and for some the motivation even for death.

"Would you like some coffee?" Atiqa's voice drifts by in my vacuum, as if the question were directed at someone else. Her sorrow at the face of sadness I have been wearing for days now needs no intrusive words. At that instant my voice deserts me.

I answer with a nod. She slips silently out to come back minutes later with a big copper coffee tray, bearing a pitcher, cups, sugar bowl, orange-flower water, and a plate of sweets.

In other cities, coffee is served already poured in a cup with a piece of sugar and a spoon next to it.

But Casantina is a city that hates brevity; it puts all the contents of its warehouse on permanent display. It wears its entire wardrobe and it spouts the repertoire of its mind without reserve.

That is why even sadness was a gaudy festival there.

I gather up the papers scattered in front of me to make room for the coffee just as if I am making space for you. Some are old, rough scribbles, others blank sheets that have been around for days, awaiting even a few words to breathe energy into them and bring them alive.

Words are all that is needed to take the ferry from the silence of oppressive reminiscence to the thunderous joy of cathartic oblivion but . . . I left the sugar on the side and sipped my coffee bitter, the way your love made me accustomed to. And only after I realized how sweet to my senses was the tart taste of that drink did I feel capable of writing about you.

So I lit a nervous cigarette and went chasing through the smoke for the words that for years had seared my soul, words whose fire had never been quenched by ink, not even once.

Is paper then an ashtray for memories, where we always deposit the ashes of the last cigarette of nostalgia and what remains of the last disappointment?

Which one of us lights up or stubs out the other? I really don't know. Before you, I didn't write anything worth mentioning, but because of you I'll put pen to paper.

Eventually, I'll find the right phrases. Nothing will stop me from unearthing the words to tell my story, because it is my right now to choose the manner in which my tale is told. I didn't choose that story. It wouldn't have been mine at all had destiny not accidentally installed you at every turn of its chapters.

How come this confusion? How did the white surface of those pages metamorphose from the huge virgin canvases yet to be filled, still leaning on a studio wall that used to be mine?

Why did the letters of the alphabet run off just the way colors deserted me before, turning my world into a black-and-white television that broadcasts prehistoric silent movies?

I always envied those artists who switched effortlessly from painting to writing, simply as if they were moving from

one compartment of the mind to another, or shifting to a new woman without bidding farewell to the last. But that's not me. I'm a one-woman man.

Here is the pen then, at once an instrument of vibes and jibes. Here is an implement that doesn't know how to lie, ignorant of how to cloud the truth, and unaware of how to gloss over a gaping wound.

Here are the words I have been deprived of, naked the way I wanted them, painful the way I desired them. So, why does the shiver of fear paralyze my hand and stop me from writing?

Am I only now realizing that I have exchanged the brush for a stylus and that writing to you is lethal, just like your love?

I sat down sipping your bitter coffee with a suspicious pleasure. I felt almost as though I found an introductory sentence for the book, a phrase that could be as commonplace as a line from a letter, like:

"I'm writing from a city that bears your picture in every view. I look like it now. Birds still swoop busily across those bridges, while I, hanging around here, became another bridge.

"Don't love bridges any more . . ."

Or something else, such as:

"I thought of you while sipping a coffee . . ."

"Fate decreed that you had to add a lump of sugar, even for a single time. So what's the need for an elaborate tray just for a single bitter drink?"

I could have written anything because in the end novels are just the letters and greeting cards we write off-season—where we publish the climate of our souls for those who care to take an interest.

So, the most beautiful novel is the one that starts with a sentence wholly unexpected by someone who lived through our storms and norms, and who might once have been the cause of the changing seasons of our moods.

There is a typhoon in my head, as a number of phrases you'd never expect buffet each other. Suddenly, a mistral begins to flow from the memory.

I gulp down the coffee and throw open the window to escape from you to the autumn sky, to the trees and bridges and the passers-by.

To a city I have regained, this time for another reason, after you made me an appointment with her.

Here is Casantina. Here is everything—you.

Through that same window which you used years ago, there streams in the same call to prayer, the street cries of peddlers, the clattering footsteps of women clad in black, and songs wafting up from a loudspeaker that never tires. As they resume their old pursuits and haunts, you are with them.

O apple, o apple . . . tell me why people adore you.

The simplicity of the fruit-seller's song stops me short.

It forces me face to face with my homeland. It removes any glimmer of doubt about where I am. I'm in an Arab city. The years I spent in Paris seem a fanciful dream.

Is reciting poems of love to fruits an Arab phenomenon? Or is it because only apples still carry the flavor of the original and first sin that they are delicious to the point of singing to them in more than one Arab country?

And what if you were an apple?

No, you were not an apple.

But you were the woman who seduced me into eating it. You were toying with me, playing the instinctive game of Eve, and I was unable to suppress or deny the red-blooded man in me, to resist being as foolish a pushover with you as Adam was with the first temptress.

"Hello Si Khaled! How are you today?"

A neighbor, whose gaze ascended the stories of my melancholy, greets me and my mourning. He seems surprised at the lifeless soul standing at the back of a balcony of distraction.

I follow his steps with an absent-minded look as he heads to the nearby mosque, his and the steps of other passers-by, some sauntering and others with a determined stride, but all moving toward the same place.

The whole of my homeland is on its way to pray while the loudspeaker glorifies the consumption of an apple. The

:nna-littered roofs round the minaret suck in from the sky
:ign channels that serve up on the screen all manner of hi-
ı ways of tasting the forbidden fruit. I choke. In fact, I
ı't even like fruit, and especially apples were not of
ıcern to me. I was in love with you, but what was my
ne? Though your love came to me as a sin, what
ısgression did I commit?

"How do you do?" another neighbor asks before joining
mosque-bound throng. My tongue issues a few terse
rds in his direction before silently asking about you.

And how am I? I am the product of what you did to me,
dam. So how are you?

You are the woman who cloaked my nostalgia with
dness, who then gradually assumed the features of a city
l the contours of a country.

And then, when time wasn't looking, this woman became
world as if I were entering compartments of my memory
ıt had not been inhabited for years.

How are you?

You were Casantina's mulberry tree, every season in
ıck. You were the city's clothes, its happiness, its joys, its
sery, and its lovers.

Answer me, where are you now?

For this Casantina has cold hands and feet, fervid lips, and
vered moods.

That's the size of it.

Nowadays, you also look like today's city. If only you
ıew.

Let me close the window.

Marcel Pagnol used to say: "Think always of ordinary
ents, the kind that may actually happen." Isn't death in the
ıd ordinary, exactly like birth, love, marriage, sickness,
;ing, being among strangers, going insane, and other things?

How long is the list of ordinary events that we expect to
: completely extraordinary until they actually occur? Such
ıings that we think happen only to others and that life, for
ıme reason, will spare us for the most part, until one day we
nd ourselves staring them in the face.

When I look back through my life, I find that the only real exceptional event was meeting you. It was the only incident whose effect on me I couldn't have foreseen, because I didn't know then that exceptional events carry in their train many commonplace happenings too.

Despite that, to this day, I still wonder after all these years how I should categorize your love. Is it in the list of ordinary things that may happen to any of us any day, like falling ill or tripping on the stairs or going crazy?

Where should I slot the events that started that day?

As an exceptional event, you're a planetary gift that eluded even the astronomers, a tremor that didn't register on the seismographer's chart. Were you an earthly accident or a heavenly mistake?

I flip through the morning paper looking for convincing answers to an ordinary event that changed the course of my life and brought me here. After all these years I look at the pages of our misery and the country's black ink rubs off on my hands. Some newspapers demand that readers should wash their hands if they touch them, though not always for the same reason. One stains your hands, and the other, better printed, pollutes your mind. Is it because newspapers look always like their owners? I think our newspapers start their day in just the same way that we do, with sleepy features, and a face washed hurriedly before rushing into the street without taking the trouble to comb the hair, put on the right tie, or seduce us with a smile.

25 October 1988.

Hectares of big headlines and a lake of black ink, a lot of blood and so little sensitivity. Some newspapers sell you the same pictures on their front page every day, just adding a new suit. Some papers sell you the same lies every day in a less intelligent way. Others sell you a ticket to escape from your own world, nothing more.

But since that is not possible any more, I'll fold the paper and go and wash my hands. The last time an Algerian publication attracted my attention was about two months ago. I was scanning a magazine by chance. I was jolted by a picture

of you filling a whole half page, accompanied by an interview talking about the launch of your new book. My eyes were glued to that frame containing your face. I tried in vain to understand the meaning of what you were saying. I read your words, but in my haste, I stumbled over them and became confused. It was as if I were the one talking to you about myself and not you talking to others about a story that probably wasn't ours.

What kind of bizarre rendezvous did we have that day? How come I didn't expect after all these years that you would make an appointment for me on paper between two pages of a magazine that I don't usually read? Murphy's law, right? Just my bad luck that by chance I buy a magazine that I don't usually read and that turns my life upside down.

And do you know why I think it's bizarre?

Weren't you the wordsmith who loved and hated on paper, who ran off and returned in print, who killed and brought back to life with a stroke of the pen?

How could I not be confused when I was reading you? How could this electric shiver not run down my spine and send my heart into overdrive? It was as if I were in front of you, not your photo. Every time I went back to look at that photo afterward, I wondered how you managed to come back into my life and haunt me. I'm the one who avoided every road that led in your direction.

So how did you come back?

The wound was just beginning to heal and the heart furnished with your memory had got round to calling in the movers. Little by little you were packing up the luggage of love and leaving, quickly to take up residence in another heart.

So you left my heart the way a tourist leaves a city he visited on a package tour. Everything is scheduled in advance, even the hour of departure. Every detail is planned ahead of time, even the tickets for tourist attractions, the name of the play he is going to see, and the addresses of the shops where he will buy his souvenirs.

Was your trip that boring? There I was, in front of your

picture, yet confused and bewildered as if I were really looking at you. Your new hairstyle surprised me. It was short. Your hair used to be like a scarf that was so long it shut out the solitude of my nights. What did you do to it?

I stopped for a long time at your eyes. I looked in them to remind myself of my first defeat at your hands.

Once there was nothing more beautiful than your eyes, but how miserable I was to see them now; yet, I was also happy. Have they changed as well, or is it the way I see you that has altered? I kept looking at your face to discover what caused my former madness. I almost didn't recognize your lips nor your smile with its new lipstick.

How could I once have seen in you a resemblance to my mother? How could I have imagined you wearing her dress, kneading dough with those long polished nails to make bread whose taste I'd missed for years?

What kind of madness was that and what idiocy?

Has marriage really changed your expressions and your childlike laugh? Has it also changed your memory and the taste of your lips and the gypsy hue of your skin?

Did that impoverished prophet make you forget? The one who was stripped of the Ten Commandments on his way to you. The one who brought you only the Eleventh Commandment.

There you were in front of me, wearing the dress of a heretic. You have chosen another path and wear another face, one I don't recognize any more, a face like those in magazines or a mannequin in a shop window, painstakingly draped and decorated to sell. It could be toothpaste or anti-wrinkle cream.

Or maybe you wore that mask only to promote written merchandise that you called *The Turn of Oblivion*, merchandise that could be the story of my life with you and the memory of my pain.

Of course this could just be the latest method you have discovered of killing me again and one that avoids leaving your fingerprints on my neck.

That day I remembered a conversation we once had when

I asked you why you specifically chose to write a novel. Your answer amazed me. I couldn't figure out how much truth and how much deceit there was in your smile as you said: "I needed to put some order in my life and to get rid of some of the old furniture. Our spirits need refurbishing just as much as any house we live in and I can't keep my windows closed on more than one body.

"The only reason we write novels is to kill off heroes and do away with people whose presence has become a burden. Every time we write about them we purge them from our system and fill up with fresh air."

You added, after a brief pause: "In fact, every successful novel is a kind of crime that we commit against some memory and maybe against someone. We carry out a completely silent murder in full view of everyone and only the victim recognizes that the lethal words were intended for him.

"Failures are merely botched crimes and the writers should be stripped of their licenses to carry a pen because they don't know how to manipulate words. They might end up murdering the wrong victim by mistake, including themselves. And that is after killing the readers with boredom."

Why didn't your sadistic tendencies arouse my suspicions that day, and why didn't I anticipate the crimes that followed when you tested out all your other weapons? I didn't expect then that one day you would point your arsenal in my direction. That's why I laughed at your words. Maybe yet another kind of amazement at you began that day because in those circumstances we don't resist the madness of admiring our killer.

For all that, I expressed my surprise and said: "I used to think that a novel was the way writers lived a love story a second time, their way of giving eternity to those they had loved."

Apparently my reply surprised you as well. You looked as though you had found a bogus item in your bank statement. You said: "That could be true too, because in the end we kill

only those we have loved. We give them literary immortality as compensation. That's a fair deal, isn't it?"

Fair? Who can debate with tyrants about their fairness or their oppression?

Who debated with Nero the day he burned Rome down out of a passionate lust to gaze upon flames? And you, weren't you like him? A woman whose professional craft showed equally fiery passion? Were you even then plotting my imminent demise and trying to console me in advance for my disaster? Or maybe you were playing with words as usual, watching their influence on me and secretly enjoying my perpetual amazement in front of you and my astonishment at your remarkable capacity for creating expressions equal in size to your contradictions.

All possibilities were on the table.

For I might have been the victim of this novel of yours and the corpse that you have to adjudge to attain immortality and decided to mummify with words as usual.

And maybe I was just the victim of my illusion, and your lies that look like honesty. Because only you know in the end the answer to all these questions that haunted me like the stubbornness of someone searching vainly for the truth.

When did you write that book?

Was it before your marriage or afterward? Before Ziad died or later? Did you write about me or about him? Did you write it to kill me or bring him back to life? Or to finish us both off and kill us together with a single book, just the way you left us both for the sake of one man?

When I read that news two months ago, I had absolutely no conception that you would return with that persistent presence, and that your book would become the center of my thoughts and a vicious solitary treadmill for me. After all that had happened I just couldn't go looking for it in bookshops, to hand over money to a sales assistant to buy my story. Nor could I ignore it and get on with my life as if I'd never heard about it, or as if it didn't concern me at all.

Wasn't I burning to read the rest of the story? You know, the one that ended when my back was turned, the one whose

last chapters I didn't know, chapters in which I was an absent witness after being the book's opening character. Just my luck forever to be merely witness and martyr in a story that had room for only one hero.

I've got your book now. It's in front of me but I can't read it today, so I've left it on my table closed like a mystery, threatening me like a time bomb, its silent presence helping me to excavate a mine of words inside me and jolt my memory.

Everything in that book provokes me now. The title you chose is an obvious ploy, and the smile on your photo ignores my sorrow. Your expression—devoid of all emotion—treats me as an ordinary reader, one that doesn't know much about you.

Everything . . . even your name.

Maybe your name provokes me the most because it leaps around in my memory even before its distinguished letters dart to the eye.

Your name isn't to be read but to be heard like music played on a solo instrument for an audience of one.

How can I read the book without feeling when it represents an episode from an amazing story compiled from a coincidence and the crossing of our fates that day? The write-up on the back of the book says that it is a literary event.

So I cover the back of the book with a pile of papers that I wrote in a moment of delusion and say: "It's time for you to write or be silent forever, man, because what's happening these days is really strange!"

And suddenly the cold makes the decision for me. The Casantina night creeps toward me from the window of exile so I put the top back on the pen and slide under my blanket of lonely isolation.

Since I realized that every city gets the night it deserves, the night that resembles its character, and that it is the only thing that reveals the city's guilty secrets and casts off in the dark what it conceals during the day, I decided to avoid looking out of this window at night.

All cities perform their unintentional night-time strip and

disclose their secrets to strangers even when they say nothing. Even when they lock their doors.

And because cities are like women, some of them make us hasten the arrival of the dawn but . . .

Soirs, soirs, que de soirs pour un seul matin.

How did I remember that poem of Henri Michou? I repeated it to myself in more than one language.

Evenings, evenings, so many evenings for a single morning.

How did I remember it, and when did I memorize it? Is it because for years I had expected miserable evenings like this one that will have only a single morning? I dig into my memory for the poem this line was taken from and find that it is called "Old Age."

Suddenly my discovery scares me as if I am finding out alone the new features of my face. Does old age overtake us in just one single long night? And in an interior darkness that dulls us in every way and compels us to walk slowly with no clear direction? Could boredom, confusion, and monotony be a part of the specifications for old age or are they drawn from the blueprint of this city? Is it me who is going into old age, or is the entire country now entering a collective period of decline? Isn't it that the country holds the superior power both to make us grow and to become old in a few months and sometimes in just a few weeks?

Before today I've never felt the weight of years. Your love was my youth, my studio was my boundless solar energy, and Paris was once an elegant city that would be ashamed to neglect its appearance in its own presence. But they pursued and haunted me there in my exile and extinguished the flame of my passion and drove me all the way here.

Now we are all standing on the homeland's erupting volcano and we have no alternative but to become one with the lava flying from its mouth and forget about our small fires.

Today nothing is worthy of all this elegance and manners, the homeland itself is not ashamed any more to present itself to us in a very inappropriate situation.

There is nothing more difficult than to start writing at an age when others have finished saying everything.

Writing after fifty for the first time is something at once insane and sensual. It's a lot like returning to the age of being an adolescent.

Something exciting yet dumb, that resembles a love affair between a man at the age of decline and an unsullied quill.

The former, confused and in a hurry, the latter an eager virgin that all the ink in the world couldn't satiate.

Since that is the case, I reckon that what I've penned so far is just a preparation for real writing and an excess of lust for these sheets that for years I've dreamed of filling.

Maybe tomorrow, I will start writing properly. I always like to relate important events in my life to a date that provides a clue to the memory of something else.

This idea seduced me again while I was listening to the news that evening allowing me to discover—I, who lost all kind of relationship with time—that tomorrow will be the first of November. How could I decline a date like that to start the book? On the first of November thirty-four years ago, the first bullet in the war of liberation was fired, and I arrived here three weeks ago, the same date as the last group of martyrs fell.

One of them was the man whose body I came here to bear to the grave and bury.

Between the first and the last bullets, the victim had changed; the targets had become different ones and the country had become something completely different.

That is why tomorrow will be a day of mourning whose dues have already been paid.

There won't be any military parade or any receptions or official commemorations. They will just throw accusations at each other, while we go and visit the graves.

Tomorrow, I will not visit that grave. My sorrow is private, not open to the public. I prefer the dignified silence of a conspiratorial piece of paper.

Absolutely everything is spurring me on tonight, and I feel as if I could at last write something amazing and not fall apart as I usually do.

How painful is the coincidence that brought me back here,

after all these years to the same place, to find the body of the one I used to love waiting for me as reliably as the first memory.

The past wakes up tonight inside me, confusing, surreptitiously leading me to the dungeons of my mind. I try to push it away but will I be able to resist my memory this evening?

I close the door of my room and open the window.

I try to see something other than myself, and I see the window looking at me. The forests of laurel and oak stretch out ahead of me. A Casantina covered with its old veil crawls toward me with all these bushes and secret paths and slopes that I once knew, surrounding the city like a security belt whose various paths lead you through the inner city and its thickly wooded forests to the location of the secret hide-out of the mujahideen, explaining to you tree after tree and one cave after another.

All the roads in this ancient Arab city lead to resistance, all the woods and the rocks here are enlisted in the ranks of the revolution ahead of you.

Some cities do not choose their destinies. They are sentenced by history and geography not to surrender.

And that is why their sons don't always have the choice. Is it strange that I look so much like this city to the point of fanaticism?

One day thirty years ago, I followed those roads and I chose those mountains to be my home and my secret school where I learned the only subject that was forbidden to study. I knew then that among its graduates there wasn't a third group, my destiny will be determined in the tiny gap separating freedom and death.

That death for which we had chosen another more seductive name, so we could go to it with no fear, and maybe with a secret lust, as if we were going to something other than our demise.

Why did we then forget to give freedom more than one name? And how did we minimize right from the start the very basic concept of our freedom?

Death was then walking by our side and sleeping and eating bread with us in a hurry. Just like patience, faith, and longing, ambiguous happiness never left us.

Death was walking and breathing by our side, and days came back harsh as always, only different from the previous ones in the number of martyrs, mostly those whom no one ever expected to die, whose end, for some reason, no one figured would be that near and painful. That was the logic of death which I, at that time, didn't fully understand.

I still remember them, those we became accustomed to speak about afterward in the plural, as if the plural specifically in that case were not an abbreviated aide memoire but as if their whole consciousness had been abridged.

They weren't collective martyrs. Each one of them was a martyr on his own. One was killed in the first battle as if he came especially to die.

Another fell only a day before setting out on a secret visit to his parents, after he had spent weeks studying and preparing the exact details of the visit. A third got married and returned to die a husband. Yet another was dreaming to come back one day to find himself a bride but never did.

In wars, the sad ones are not always those who die; the most wretched are those left behind, orphans, widows, and those with broken dreams.

I discovered this fact early. One martyr after the other and one story after another.

And I discovered at the same time that I was probably the only one who left behind only a wet grave of a mother who died from sickness and from heartbreak, and a brother a few years younger than me and a father too busy with his young bride's demands.

That old adage—the one who loses his father is not an orphan, only the one who loses his mother—was absolutely true.

I was an orphan, and I realized this very deeply each moment. Because the hunger for affection is a fearful and painful feeling that continues to tear you from the inside and stays with you until one way or another it finishes you off.

Did I join the resistance at that time as a subconscious way of seeking death, a death more beautiful away from these sick feelings that were gradually filling me with hatred and bitterness for everything?

The revolution was entering its second year and my orphandom its third month. I can't remember now exactly when the country assumed the features of motherhood and gave me an unexpected mysterious affection and that obsessive sense of belonging to it.

It was probably the disappearance of Si Taher from the neighborhood in Sidi al-Mabrouka a few months before that had a role in my reaching a verdict and my hastiness in taking that sudden decision. It wasn't a secret to anybody that he had moved into a hiding place in the mountains surrounding Casantina to form with others one of the first guerrilla cells of the armed struggle.

Where did the name Si Taher come back from to add to my perplexity? And which one of you lured me to the other?

Where did he come back from? Did he really ever leave, where two blocks from here there is a street that bears his name?

There is something called 'the power of the name.'

And there are names that, when recalled, almost jolt you to attention or put your cigarette out. And you almost speak about them as if you are talking to them, with that same startled awe.

And therefore, his name still had its awesome effect on me. Habit did not kill it, nor did being with him all the time. The experience of being incarcerated together did not alter it, nor did the years of struggle change it into an ordinary name for a friend or a neighbor. Symbols always know how to surround themselves with that invisible shield that forms a separation between the ordinary and the exceptional, and between the possible and the impossible in everything.

Here I am recalling his name on a night that wasn't reserved for him.

And while I take another puff on my last cigarette the loudspeaker on the minaret blares away, announcing the

dawn prayer,while from a faraway room comes the crying of a baby whose voice awakens the whole household.

So, I envy the minaret, and I envy newborn babies; only they have the right to scream and the ability to do it before life tames their vocal chords and teaches them silence.

I don't remember who said, "A man spends his first years learning how to speak, and the Arab regimes teach him to spend the rest of his life silently."

Silence could have become a blessing especially tonight, just like oblivion, because on occasions like these memory does not come in installments, but invades you like a waterfall that carries you away to unknown slopes.

How could you at that moment stop them without hitting the rocks and breaking your neck in a memory lapse?

There you are, panting after it to catch up with a past that in reality you never really left and to chase a memory that you live in because it has become your body.

Your mutilated body, nothing more.

But then you know that there are others panting right now from one stage to another for one excuse or another to condemn a history of which they were a part.

They are doing this in an attempt to follow the new wave before they are dragged off by the flood. All you can do is pity them.

For how miserable it is to live with wet clothes, as if you had just got out of a swamp, without even waiting a while until they are dry!

Silent comes Si Taher tonight!

Silent the way martyrs come!

Silent as usual.

And here you are, confused before him as usual.

The fifteen years separating you were always longer than the actual ticking of the clock.

They were a lifetime by themselves and a symbol by themselves to a man who possessed, besides that eloquence that is the hallmark of all those who went to Islamic societies and studied in Casantina, another eloquence—that of his presence.

Si Taher knew when to smile and when to be angry, and he knew how to speak and how to be silent. The look on his face never ceased to inspire awe, nor did the mysterious smile that evinced a different explanation every time leave his face.

"Smiles are full stops and commas and parentheses," wrote Malek Haddad, "and very few are those who still know well how to put commas and full stops into their worlds.

In the al-Kudya prison, I had my first appointment for struggle with Si Taher. It was an appointment charged with unbridled emotions and the astonishment of being arrested for the first time, with its dignity and fear.

Si Taher, who had lured me day after day into the revolution, was aware of his responsibility for my being there that day. And maybe he secretly pitied my eighteen years and my youth cut short and my mother. He knew her very well, and knew what the experience of my first arrest could do to her.

But he was hiding all his sympathy from me. Repeating for those who needed to hear, "Prisons were created for men."

Al-Kudya prison was at the time, like all eastern Algerian prisons, suffering all of a sudden from an excess of manhood. That was immediately after the demonstrations of May 8, 1945, when the cities of Casantina, Stef, and their suburbs offered the first advance payment for the revolution. A couple of thousand of martyrs fell in one demonstration, and tens of thousands of prisoners crammed the cells. This caused the French to make one of the dumbest mistakes by joining together in the same cell, and for several months, political prisoners with criminals. Cells whose occupants would sometimes number more than twenty.

They made the revolution contagious; it passed on to the criminals, who found the opportunity for political awareness and the chance to clean up their honor by joining the revolution. Many of them were killed afterward in battles, and some of them are still alive until now living blameless lives as important people, the way historical leaders of the liberation live. After history had taken care of readjusting their records to their state of pristine virginity.

Some of the political prisoners found—in that stupid

mistake of the colonial—a chance to meet each other and enough time to discuss and think about the country's affairs and plan the next stage.

Today when I remember that experience, its intensity and astonishment seem to me longer than it was, even though for me it lasted only the six months that I spent there before I was released. Two of my friends and I were young, and because there were others who meant more to the French, we were set free.

I went back to Casantina High School after having skipped a school year to find the same program, the same philosophy books, and the same French literature waiting for me.

Only some of the schoolboys were still absent, either prisoners or martyrs.

Most of them were students in the senior grades who were supposed to graduate among the first group of real Algerian-French intellectuals and employees.

And that was their honor, those who had been earmarked by some as traitors because they chose French culture and high schools in a city where no one could ignore the power of the Arabic language and its awe in the hearts and the memories of people.

Is it strange then to have among those who were imprisoned and tortured after such demonstrations so many of them: those who, because of their Western culture, enjoyed an early political awareness and an excess of patriotism and dreams of Arabism; those who realized, as World War II was ending to the benefit of the French and their allies, that France had used Algerians to fight a war that wasn't theirs and that they had paid thousands of lives in battles they were not concerned with, to come back after that to their slavery.

The coincidence of my being with Si Taher in the same cell was legendary in itself; the experience of struggle kept following me for years with all its details and might have had after that an influence in changing my destiny. There are certain men you meet that make you feel as if you have met destiny.

Si Taher was exceptional in everything, as if he was preparing himself from the beginning to be more than a man.

He was born to be a leader. There was something in him from the descendants of Tareq ibn Ziad and the Prince Abdel Qader and those who could change history with a single speech.

The French authorities who tortured him and locked him up for three years knew that very well, but what they didn't know was that Si Taher would take his revenge years after that, becoming the most wanted man after every mission accomplished by the mujahideen in eastern Algeria.

What kind of coincidence was that? Fate brought me back after exactly ten years to join me with Si Taher in an armed struggle.

In April, 1955, I joined the front. My school friends were just starting a school year that was going to be crucial. I was in my twenty-fifth year starting my new life. I remember how surprising to me was the way Si Taher welcomed me. He didn't ask me about any details of my private life or my studies; he didn't even ask me how I made up my mind to join the front, nor did he ask about the road I took to get to him. He examined me closely before he hugged me with warmth as if he had been waiting for me there for years.

Then he said: "You came!"

I answered him with a mysterious blend of happiness and sadness,

"I came!"

This is the way Si Taher was sometimes, abrupt even when he was happy. So, I was abrupt in my sadness, too.

Later, he asked me about my family and especially about my mother. I told him that she had died three month before; I thought he understood everything because he said, while he was patting my shoulder and something like a tear glittered in his eyes, "God rest her soul. She suffered so much."

And then he went with his thoughts so far to a place where I did not know.

Later I envied that tear in his eye that lifted my mother to the ranks of martyrs. I had never seen Si Taher shed a tear

treatment. But the only treatment for me was to amputate my left arm because it was impossible to extract the bullets. There was no place for discussion or hesitation. The only talk was about the safe roads we could take to get to Tunisia where the safe bases of the mujahideen were.

Here I lay facing another reality.

Here is destiny throwing me out of my shelter, from the life and nightly battles, bringing me out from secrecy to the light to put me in another battleground not belonging to life or death, a ground only for pain, and a balcony from which I could only watch what was happening on the real battleground. It was clear from Si Taher's words that day that I might never return to the front again.

On that last day Si Taher tried to preserve his natural tone. He was bidding me farewell the same way he would do it every time before a new battle. Only this time he knew he was preparing me to bear my battle with destiny.

But unlike the other times, he was brief probably because there weren't any specific directions given in these cases or maybe because that day he was suffering from the biggest human loss yet, losing in a single battle ten of his best men among the wounded and killed. He was aware of the value of each mujahid, and the need for each individual man when the revolution was under siege.

I didn't say anything to him that day. I had that mysterious feeling that I was about to be orphaned again. Two tears stuck in my eyes. I was bleeding as if the pain in my arm was being gradually transmitted into my whole body, sticking as a lump in my throat, a lump of deception and pain and fear of the unknown.

Events were happening fast in front of me, and my fate was taking a new turn from one hour to the next. Only Si Taher's voice giving me his last instructions was getting to me, becoming my only connection with the world. Despite all that, I still remember his last presence when he came checking on me an hour before we set out. He put a small piece of paper in my pocket and some money. He bent over me and said as if he was passing a secret: "I've put in your

pocket my family's address in Tunisia and some money," and continued to whisper, "If you ever get there, I want you to visit them when you recover and give this money to my wife to buy a gift for the little girl. I want you to register her at the town hall if you can because it could be a long time before I can see them."

He came back moments later as if he had forgotten something, and he added confusedly pronouncing that name for the first time.

"I chose this name for her . . . Please register her whenever you can and give her a kiss for me, and give my best regards to my wife."

That was the first time I ever heard your name. I heard it in a moment of bleeding between life and death, and in my coma, I clung to its letters just like a feverish man clings to a word in a moment of delusion.

Just like a messenger clings to a will afraid to lose it.

Just like a drowning man clings to the ropes of a dream.

Between the *alif* of *alam*—pain—and the *mim* of *mut'a*—pleasure—was your name, *Ahlam*, dreams, split in the middle by the *ha* of *hurqa*—burning—and the *la*, that 'no' of warning. How could I not have been aware of your name, which was born in the midst of those first fires, a small flame in that war. How could I not have been aware of a name that contains its own opposite, beginning with the 'Ah!' of both pain and pleasure. How could I not have been aware of that singular–plural name, like the name of this nation, knowing from the beginning that the plural was always created only to be divided.

Between smiles and grief, it happens that I recall these instructions today, "Kiss her for me," and I laugh at fate. I laugh at myself and at the weirdness of coincidence.

But then, I become ashamed of the seriousness of his voice, and of that rare weakness that enveloped that sentence of his. He who always wanted to appear before us as a strong and serious man with no worries save those of his country, and no family but his men.

He admitted to me that he was a weak man, a man with

nostalgia, who missed things, who could cry, but within the limits of timidity and always in secret, because symbols do not have the right to cry from longing.

He didn't mention your mother, for instance. Don't you think he was missing her, that bride whom he enjoyed for only a couple of stolen months and left pregnant?

But why all this sudden hastiness? Why doesn't he wait for a while to arrange a few days of absence, to go register you himself!

He waited six months so why couldn't he wait a few more weeks, and why specifically me?

What destiny made me come there at your timing?

Every time I asked myself that question, I was amazed and I believed more and more in what was written.

Despite his responsibilities, Si Taher could have run away for a day or two to Tunisia. Crossing the borders couldn't have frightened him; not even the electrified Maurice line with its minefield stretching between the Tunisian and the Algerian borders from the sea to the desert. Later on he crossed it three times, a record for the dozens of mujahideen whose bodies were left stretched there.

Was it Si Taher's sense of discipline and respect for the law that created in him such worries, having discovered helplessly that he was a father, for months now, to a baby to whom he hadn't given a name yet or even registered? Or was he afraid? He who waited for you for so long, to lose you by not rooting your existence and your belonging to him on an official paper sealed by an official stamp.

Did he consider your illegal status as bad luck and want to register his dreams in the municipality to make sure that they became real and that fate would not come back to take them away from him? In the end, was his dream also to become a father like all other men, especially after an unsuccessful marriage without any children?

I didn't know if deep down in him he had preferred the newborn baby to be a boy. Later on, I learned that he had tried to cheat destiny and left a boy's name on hand before he traveled, ignoring the possibility of a female. He might have

also done it out of a military mentality and a patriotic obssession in his subconcious, since all his military plans and discussions started with a sentence that I often heard him repeat, "We need more men." Was that the reason why Si Taher seemed happy and optimistic about everything during that period?

The tough man had suddenly changed. He became more malleable and had more of a sense of humor in his free time.

Something had been gradually changing inside of him, making him closer to the others and more understanding of their personal conditions.

He started granting, more easily than before, vacations to some soldiers for quick visits to their parents, while depriving himself of the same thing. Such late fatherhood changed him and came as a ready symbol of a rosier future.

A little miracle for hope . . . that was you.

❖

Another morning . . .

Here is the day surprising me with its casual noise and its sudden light forcing brightness into me. I feel that it is taking something away from me.

In that moment, I hated that curious and embarrassing side of the sun.

I want to write about you in the dark. My story with you is a film, and I fear that light will burn and erase it, because you are a woman who grew in my most secret dungeons.

I can only write about you after having drawn all the curtains and closed the windows of my room.

But even though looking at the papers piled in front of me makes me happy I filled them yesterday, during a night consecrated to madness, I might still give them to you nicely wrapped in a book as a present.

And I know . . .

I know how much you hate such politeness and how selfish you are! I also know that nothing concerns you in the end, outside your own boundaries and your own body.

But have some patience, madam.

Just a few more pages before I undress my other memory before you. A few necessary pages before I fill you with arrogance, lust, regret, and madness. For this, writing books is like making love: it also needs an introduction, though I admit that such intros are not my real problem now as much as the confusion I face in finding a point with which to begin this story.

Where do I start my story with you?

Your story with me has so many beginnings that start with unexpected endings, and tricks of fate.

When I talk about you, I wonder about whom am I talking? A baby who was one day crawling at my feet, or a young girl who turned my life upside down twenty-five years later, or the letters of a woman who looks almost like you. I gaze at her on the cover of an elegant book entitled *The Turn of Oblivion,* and I wonder, "Is she really . . . you?"

If I have to give you a name, what could it be?

Should it be the name your father wanted for you, for which I went to the municipality instead of him to register? Or should it be the first name you carried for six months while waiting for another legal name?

"Hayat! Life!"

This is what I will call you. It is not your name, anyway, but it is one of your names. Let me then call you by that name since it is the one I have known you by, and the one that only I know, the name that no tongue has ever pronounced nor written on the pages of books or magazines or even on any official records.

The name you were once called in order to live, so that God would give you life. The one I killed one day by giving you another official name. It is my right to revive it today, it is mine, and no man has ever used it to call you before me.

Your childish name that crawls on my tongue, as if it is you twenty-five years ago, and every time I pronounce it you are once more a baby sitting on my lap, playing with letters stuffing your hand and telling me words I don't understand.

Only then do I forgive you and forget all your sins.

Every time I pronounced it I fell back into the past, and once again you became small as a doll. And there you were all of a sudden—my daughter.

Should I read your book to know how that little baby turned into a woman? But I already know, in advance, that you will not write about your childhood, not even about your first years.

You fill the empty holes of memories only with words, and you get over wounds by lying; maybe that was the secret of your attachment to me. I am the one who knows the missing link in your life.

I know that father you only saw a few times in your life and that city where you used to live, but that never inhabited you. The city whose alleys you treated with no passion and whose memory you walked over without paying attention.

You became attached to me in order to discover what you did not know, and I did the same to forget what I knew. Was it possible for that kind of love to last?

Si Taher was a third party in our story from the beginning. Even when we did not talk about him, he was among us, present in his absence. So, would I kill him a second time only to be alone with you?

I wish you knew. I wish you knew how hard it was to hold the commandments even after a quarter of a century and how painful was that desire, blocked by all the attendant impossibilites and principles, which in the end made it only more desirable.

The question was from the beginning . . .

How can I push Si Taher away from my memory, erase his life from my life, to give our love the chance for a natural birth?

But what would remain then, if I were to put you out of our combined memories and turn you into an ordinary girl?

Your father was an extraordinary comrade and an extraordinary leader.

He was exceptional in his life and his death. How could I forget that?

He wasn't one of the mujahideen who mounted the last

wave to secure their future—the 1962 mujahideen heroes of the last battles. Nor was he one of the coincident martyrs who were surprised by death in random shelling or a wrong bullet.

He was made from the same dough as Daydush Murad, the same as al-Arabi Ben Mehaydi and Mustafa Ben Buleid, those who would go to death, not wait for it to get them.

Could I forget that he was your father, when your constant questioning brings back his name and his awe, alive and martyred?

The heart that loved you madly is confused, when the echo of your request is still there, "Tell me about him."

I will tell you about him, my love. There is nothing easier than talking about martyrs. Their history is ready and known in advance, like their endings. And their ends forgive any mistakes they might have made. I will tell you about Si Taher because only the history of martyrs can be written; every history that comes after it is seized by the living to be written by another generation, a generation that doesn't know the truth but will figure it out automatically because there are other signs that cannot be mistaken.

Si Taher died on the threshold of independence, nothing in his hand save his weapon, nothing in his pockets except worthless paper, and nothing on his shoulders but the honor of being a martyr. Symbols carry their value in their death; only substitutes carry their value in their ranks and honorable medals and what they have filled their pockets with hurriedly in secret accounts.

Six hours of siege and concentrated shelling from a whole battalion only for his killers to be able to publish his photo in the next day's newspapers as proof of their complete victory over one of the troublemakers, those whom France had sworn to get.

Was the death of that simple man really a victory to a major power, one that was going to lose the whole of Algeria a couple of months later? This was the way he was killed in the summer of 1960 without even enjoying the victory, nor harvesting the fruit. Here is a man who gave Algeria

everything, but she didn't give him even the chance to see his own son working by his side or see you maybe a doctor or a teacher as he had dreamed. How much this man loved you! With the madness of being a father at forty, with the tenderness of someone who used to hide his strictness, with the dreams of someone whose dreams had been confiscated, with the pride of the freedom-fighter who realized with the birth of his first child that he would not completely die after that day.

I still remember the few times he came to Tunisia to visit you in secret for a day or two. I used to rush to him, anxious to hear the latest news and the developments at the front. Making an effort at the same time not to steal from him these rare hours for which he was risking his life to spend with his small family. I was amazed then to discover in him another man that I didn't know, a man with different clothes, with a smile and different words, seated in a way that made it easier for him to put you on his lap all the time and caress you.

He would live every moment fully, as if he were squeezing every drop of happiness from the short time he had with you, or stealing from his life a few hours that he knew were counted and giving you in advance enough tenderness to last your life.

That was the last time I saw him, in January 1960. He had come to attend the most important event in his life, meeting his second child, Naser, because his secret wish was to have a boy. That day for some mysterious reason I watched him closely but spoke only a few words to him. I preferred to leave him to his joy, his stolen happiness. When I came back the next day I was told that he had left for the front in a hurry and that he assured them that he would be back soon for a longer stay, but he never returned.

After that, the generosity of a miserly destiny ended. Si Taher was killed only a few months later without being able to see his son for a second time. Naser was then in his eighth month, and you were entering your fifth year. The country in the summer of 1960 was a volcano, dying and being reborn every day, and with its death and birth there was a crossing of

more than one story, some of them painful and some amazing.

Some came late the way my story came and met at the crossroads with you that day.

A lesser story written in advance that changed the course of my life, after a whole lifetime, according to a verdict by something named destiny, which could also be insane passion.

That thing that surprises us from where we never expect it, ignoring all our principles and our ethics.

That thing that comes late, in a moment when we do not expect anything any more. All this turns everything in us upside down.

Was it possible for me, then, after all the communication bridges between us had been cut, to resist a mad desire of mine to write two stories at once? If I were to do that, I would do it just as I had lived them with and without you, full of desire, passion, dreams, grudges, jealousy, disappointment, and disasters to the extent of death.

You loved to listen to me and flip me over just as you would do in examining an old copybook. It was absolutely necessary for me to write that book for you, to tell you what I couldn't, due to lack of time.

I would talk to you about all those who loved you for various reasons while you betrayed them, again for various reasons. I would even tell you about Ziad. Didn't you love talking about him while pretending not to?

There was no need any more for pretense. Each one of us had chosen his destiny.

I would tell you about this city that was a party to our love and later on became the reason for our separation, the place where the scene of our beautiful disaster ended.

So, what tale are you writing in your book?

Which one of us did you write about, which one did you love, and which one are you going to kill?

To whom were you faithful, you who used to swap one love for another, one memory for another, and one impossible situation for another?

Where do I fit in the list of your lovers and victims?

Do I occupy the first place because I am closer to the first edition, or I am the fake copy of Si Taher, the one that death didn't turn into a photocopy?

Am I the counterfeit father or the counterfeit love?

You are like this country, a professional in forging papers and changing them without any effort.

Montirlant said if you are unable to kill those that you hate, don't say that you hate them because you would be prostituting the word!

Let me admit to you that at this moment I hate you, but I had to write this book to kill you with it. Let me try your weapons.

Maybe you are right. What if novels are really guns loaded with lethal words, nothing more, and what if words are bullets?

But I will not use a gun with a silencer the way you do.

A man who carries a gun at this age cannot take all these precautions.

I want your death to be as noisy as I can make it because in you I am killing more than one person. Someone has to have the courage to shoot all of them some day.

So read this book to the end, and probably after that you will stop writing fantasy novels and read our story all over again.

One amazement after another and one wound after another because our miserable literature has never known a story as good as this one and never witnessed a more beautiful disaster.